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Works

NICHOL'S SERIES OF STANDARD DIVINES.

PURITAN PERIOD.

With General Preface

BY JOHN C. MILLER, D.D.,

LINCOLN COLLEGE; HONORARY CANON OF WORCESTER; RECTOR OF GREENWICH.

THE

WORKS OF GEORGE SWINNOCK, M.A.

VOL. IV.

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THE WORKS

OF

GEORGE SWINNOCK, M.A.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING:

THE LATTER PORTION OF THE FADING OF THE FLESH;
THE PASTOR'S FAREWELL; THE GODS ARE MEN;
THE BEAUTY OF MAGISTRACY;
MEN ARE GODS; AND THE INCOMPARABLENESS OF GOD.

EDINBURGH: JAMES NICHOL.
LONDON: JAMES NISBET AND CO. DUBLIN: G. HERBERT.

M.DCCC.LXVIII.

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CHAPTER IX.

The second doctrine, That God is the comfort of a Christian, with the grounds of it: his happiness is in God.

I PROCEED now to the second doctrine, from the second part of the text, The saint's comfort: 'But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

That the comfort of a Christian in his saddest condition is this, that God is his portion. The psalmist's condition was very sad; his flesh failed him. Man's spirit often decays with his flesh. The spirits and blood are let out together. His heart fell with his flesh; but what was the strong cordial which kept him from swooning at such a season? Truly this: 'But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' Aristotle affirmeth of the tortoise, that it liveth when its heart is taken away.[1] The holy man here liveth when his heart dieth. As the sap in winter retreateth to the root, and there is preserved, so the saint in crosses, in death, retireth to God, the fountain of his life, and so is comforted. David, when his wives were captivated, his wealth plundered, and his very life threatened—for the soldiers talked of stoning him—was doubtless in a very dreadful estate; one would have thought such a heavy burden must needs break his back; but, behold, the joy of the Lord was his strength. 'But David encouraged his heart in the Lord his God,' 1 Sam. xxx. 6. When the table of earthly comforts, which for a long time at best had been but indifferently spread for him, was quite empty, he fetcheth

[1] τῆς καρδίας ἀφῃρημένης.—*Lib. de Juv. et Sen.*, cap. 3.

sweetmeats out of his heavenly closet. But David encouraged his heart in the Lord his God. Methodius reporteth of the plant pyragnus, that it flourisheth in the flames of Olympus. Christians, as the salamander, may live in the greatest fire of affliction at this day; and, as the three children, may sing when the whole world shall be in a flame at the last day. They are by the Spirit of God compared to palm-trees, (Ps. xcii. 12,) which, though many weights are hanging on the top, and much drought be at the bottom, are neither, say some naturalists, borne down nor dried up. This nightingale may warble out her pleasant notes with the sharpest thorn at her breast.

The only reason which I shall give of the doctrine is this: because a godly man placeth his happiness in God. It is natural to the creature, in the midst of its sufferings, to draw its comfort and solace from that pipe, whether supposed or real—happiness. All things have a propensity towards that in which they place their felicity. If a stone were laid in the concave of the moon, though air and fire and water are between, yet it would break through all, and be restless till it come to the earth, its centre. A suitable and unchangeable rest is the only satisfaction of the rational creature. All the tossings and agitations of the soul are but so many wings to carry him hither and thither, that he may find out a place where to rest. Let this eagle once find out and fasten on the true carcase, he is contented; as the needle pointing to the north, though before in motion, yet now he is quiet. Therefore the philosopher, though in one place he tells us that delight consisteth in motion, yet in another place tells us, *μᾶλλον ἐν ἠρεμία ἢ ἐν κινήσει*, that it consisteth rather in rest.[1]

Happiness is nothing but the Sabbath of our thoughts, and the satisfaction of our hearts in the fruition of the chiefest good. According to the excellency of the object which we embrace in our hearts, such is the degree of our happiness; the saint's choice is right, God alone being the soul's centre and rest. *Omnes literæ in Jehovah sunt literæ quiescentes*, say the Rabbis. Let a sinner have but that which he counteth his treasure, though he be under many troubles he is contented. Give a covetous man wealth, and he will say, as Esau, I have enough. When an ambitious man mounts up to a chair of state, he sits down and is at ease. If a voluptuous person can but bathe himself in the streams of carnal pleasures, he is as a fish in his element. So let a godly man enjoy but his God, in whom he placeth all his joy and delight, in whom is all his hap-

[1] Eth., lib. vii. cap. *ult.*

piness and heaven, he is well; he hath all. 'Shew us the Father and it sufficeth;' no more is desired, John xiv. 8.

No man thinks himself miserable till he hath lost his happiness. A godly man is blessed when afflicted and buffeted, because God is the proper orb in which he doth fix, and he hath his God still, Job v. 17. When a few leaves blow off, his comfort is, he hath the fruit and the tree still. As a man worth millions, he can rejoice though he lose some mites. In the Salentine country there is mention made of a lake brimful; put in never so much, it runneth not over; draw out what you can, it is still full.[1] Such is the condition of a Christian—he hath never too much; and take away what you will, having God, is still full. Augustine out of Varro allegeth two hundred and eighty-eight several opinions about happiness; but those philosophers were vain in their imaginations. I shall clearly prove the strength of man's happiness to flow from another spring.

CHAPTER X.

God must needs be man's happiness, because he is an all-sufficient good.

There are some things in God which speak him to be the saint's happiness and chiefest good.

First, Because of his perfection and all-sufficiency. That which makes man happy must have no want, no weakness in it. It must be able both to secure him against all evil, and to furnish him with all good. The injuries of nature must be resisted, and the indigencies of nature must be supplied. Now this Sun of righteousness—as the great luminary of the world when it mounteth above the horizon—doth both clear the air of mists and fogs, and cheer the inhabitants with his light and heat. And according to the degree of our enjoyment of him, such is the degree of our happiness, or freedom from evil and fruition of good. Those that enjoy God perfectly in heaven know no evil; they are above all storms and tempests, and enjoy all good. 'In his presence is fulness of joy,' Ps. xvi. 11. They have a perpetual spring, a constant summer, never understanding what an autumn or winter meaneth. The Christian, who enjoyeth God but imperfectly, as all saints on earth, doth but in part enjoy these privileges. His life is a vicissitude of day and night, of light and darkness, of good and evil.

[1] Pliny, Nat. Hist., lib. ii. cap. 103.

Evil cannot hurt him, but it may fright him. He may taste of the chiefest good, but his full meal is reserved till he comes to his Father's house.

1. God is able to free a man from evil. The Greeks call a happy man μακάριος, one that is not subject to death and miseries.

That which is the happiness of man must be able, by its power, to secure him against all perils; but creatures cannot afford this help, therefore cannot be our happiness. He that trusteth to second causes, is like him that, being on the top of a tree, setteth his feet on rotten boughs, which will certainly break under him; or like the passenger, who in windy stormy weather runs to some tottering out-house, which falls upon him. But God is the almighty guard.

The schoolmen tell us the reason why Adam in his estate of innocency felt no cold, though he were naked, was because of his communion with God. God is the saints' shield to protect their bodies from all blows, Gen. xv. 1. He is therefore compared in Scripture to such things and persons as shelter men in storms, defend them in dangers. Sometimes he is called a wall of fire, because travellers in a wilderness by this means are secured from wild beasts, Zech. ii. 5; those creatures fly from fire. Sometimes to a river of broad waters, because a city, well moated and surrounded with waters, is thereby defended against enemies, Isa. xxxiii. 21.

A good sentinel is very helpful to preserve a garrison in safety. God is therefore said to watch and ward: 'I the Lord do keep it, lest any hurt it: I will keep it night and day,' Isa. xxvii. 3. And though others, when on the guard, are apt to nod and sleep, and so to give the enemy an advantage, 'He that keepeth Israel never slumbereth nor sleepeth,' Ps. cxxi. 4; he is so far from sleeping that he never slumbereth. Some naturalists tell us that lions are *insomnes;* possibly because their eyelids are too narrow for their eyes, and so they sleep with their eyes partly open. But it is most true of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. As Alexander told his soldiers, he wakes that they might sleep in safety. He is compared to a refuge: Ps. cxlii. 5, 'Thou art my refuge and my portion;' a metaphor from a stronghold or castle, to which soldiers retreat, and in which they are secure, when beaten back by an overpowering enemy. But instead of all, he is called the Lord of hosts, or general of his people, because a faithful commander goeth first into the field, and cometh last out of the field. God looketh danger in the face

before his people, and seeth them safe out of the field before he departeth: 'The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward,' Isa. lii. 12.

Travellers tell us that they who are at the top of the Alps can see great showers of rain fall under them, but not one drop of it falls on them. They who have God for their portion are in a high tower, and thereby safe from all troubles and showers. A drift-rain of evil will beat in at the creature's windows, be they never so well pointed; all the garments this world can make up cannot keep them that travel in such weather from being wet to the skin. No creature is able to bear the weight of its fellow-creature, but as reeds, break under, and as thorns, run into the sides that lean on them. The bow drawn beyond its compass breaks in sunder, and the string wound above its strength snaps in pieces. Such are outward helps to all that trust to them in hardships.

But Christians, being anchored on this rock of ages, are secure in the greatest storm. They are like Zion, which cannot be moved. The Church, according to the motto of Venice, *Immota manet.* 'In time of trouble he hides them in his pavilion, and in the secret of his tabernacle he sets them upon a rock,' Ps. xxvii. 5. God's sanctuary is his hidden place, Ezek. vii. 22, and his saints are his hidden ones, Ps. lxxxiii. 3; and there he hides them from whatsoever may hurt them. Therefore he calls his children, when it rains abroad and is stormy, to come within doors out of the wet: 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors upon thee, and hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast,' Isa. xxvi. 20.

The Christian therefore is encouraged against evils, because God is his guard. He knoweth, whilst he hath this buckler, he is shot-free, not to be pierced by any bullet: 'He covereth him with his feathers, and under his wings doth the saint trust,' Ps. xci. 4. As the hen secureth her young from the kite and ravenous fowls by clucking them under her wing, and sheltering them there, so God doth undertake to be the protection of his people, and through his strength they can triumph over trials, and defy the greatest dangers. 'At destruction and famine they can laugh,' Job v. 22; and over the greatest crosses, through him, they are more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37.

2. As God is able to free from all evil, so to fill the soul with all good, therefore, is its happiness. That which beatifieth the reasonable creature, must undertake the removal of what is destructive, and the restoring to him whatsoever may be perfective. Weak

nature must be supported, and empty nature must be supplied. Now the whole creation cannot be man's happiness, because it is unable both to defend him from evil, and to delight him with good. The comfort which ariseth from creatures is like the juice of some plums, which doth fill with wind, but yields no nourishment. He that sits at the world's table, when it is most largely spread, and fairly furnished, and feedeth most heartily on its fare, is as one that dreameth he eats, and when he awakes, lo, he is hungry. The best noise of earthly musicians can make but an empty sound, which may a little please the senses, but not in the least satisfy the soul. The world hath but small choice, and therefore makes us but small cheer; for as sick and squeasy stomachs, we are presently cloyed even with that which we called so earnestly for. Hence it was that those who esteemed their happiness to consist in pleasing their brutish part, did so vehemently desire new carnal delights. Nero had his officer that was styled, *Arbiter Neronianæ libidinis*, an inventor of new pleasures. Suetonius observeth the same of Tiberius,[1] and Cicero of Xerxes; for these men, like children, were quickly weary of that for which they were but now so unquiet. And the reason is given us, by the moralist, because error is infinite.[2]

The thirst of nature may be satisfied, but the thirst of a disease, as the dropsy, cannot. The happiness of the soul consisteth in the enjoyment of good commensurate to its desires, which no creature is, nay, not all the creatures.

But God is the happiness of the creature, because he can satisfy it. The Hebrews call a blessed man *Ashrei*, in the abstract, and in the plural number, blessednesses, Ps. xxxii. 1, because no man can be blessed for one or another good, unless he abound in all good.

The soul of man is a vessel too capacious to be filled up with a few drops of water, but this ocean can do it; whatsoever is requisite, either to promote decayed, or to perfect deficient nature, is in God. 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,' Ps. xxiii. 1. Where is all wealth, there can be no want. 'My God shall supply all your need,' Phil. iv. 19. One God answereth all necessities, because one God includeth all excellencies. He is *bonum comprehensivum;* in him are all the treasures of heaven and earth, and infinitely more. 'The God of all comforts' is his name, 2 Cor. i. 3. As all light is in the sun, so all comfort, all good, is in God. Theodoret calls Moses an ocean of divinity; some have called Rome the epitome of the world. It is true of God, he is an ocean

[1] Sueton., cap. 43. [2] Omnibus error immensus.

of all delights and blessings, without either bank or bottom, and the epitome of inconceivably more, and incomparably better, than all this world's felicities.

'The God of peace fill you with all joy,' Rom. xv. 13. Observe, here is joy which is the cream of our desires, and the overflowing of our delights; it is the sweet tranquillity of our minds, the quiet repose of our hearts; and as the sun to the flowers, it enlargeth and cheereth our affections. Joy is the mark which all would hit; and is by the philosopher well observed to be the dilation of the heart for its embracing of, closing with, and union to, its most beloved object. 2. Here is all joy; variety of what is excellent addeth much to its lustre and beauty. The Christian sits at a banquet made up of all sorts of rare and curious wines, and all manner of dainties and delicates; he may walk in this garden, and delight himself with diversity of pleasant fruits and flowers. All joy. One kind of delight, like Mary's box of ointment, being opened, filleth the whole house with its savour; what then will all sorts of precious perfumes, and fragrant ointments do? 3. Here is filling them with all joy; plenty, joined with variety of that which is so exceedingly pleasant, must needs enhance its price. There is not a crevice in the heart of a Christian into which this light doth not come; it is able to fill him, were he a far larger vessel than he is, (as they filled the pots at the feast of Cana,) up to the brim with this water, or rather with this wine. The joy arising from the creature is an empty joy, like the musician in Plutarch, who, having pleased Dionysius with a little vanishing music, was recompensed with a deceived hope of a great reward; but this is a satiating satisfying joy: 'Fill you with all joy.' But, 4. On what root doth such a variety and plenty of lovely luscious fruit grow? Truly this light of joy doth not spring out of the earth; its fountain is in heaven: 'The God of peace fill you with all joy.' The vessel of the creature runs dregs; it can never yield such choice delights: this pure river of water of life proceedeth only out of the throne of God, Rev. xxii.

CHAPTER XI.

God the happiness of man, because of his suitableness to the soul.

This delight and joy in God ariseth from his suitableness to the nature of the heaven-born saints, as I shall discover in the next heads, and their propriety in him.

Secondly, God is a proportionable good. That which makes a man happy, must be suitable to his spiritual soul. All satisfaction ariseth from some likeness between the faculty or temper which predominateth, and the object. The cause of pleasure in our meats is the suitableness of the fallen humour in our taste to that in our food. Therefore silver doth not satisfy one that is sick, nor raiment one that suffereth hunger, because these are not answerable to those particular necessities of nature. The prince of philosophers observeth truly, that those things only content the several creatures which are οἰκεια τῇ φύσει, accommodated to their several natures.[1] Birds, and beasts, and fish, do all live upon and delight in that food which is proportionable to their distinct beings. The ox feedeth on grass, the lion on flesh, the goat on boughs; some live on the dew, some on fruit, some on weeds; some creatures live in the air, others sport themselves in the waters; the mole and worm are for the earth; the salamander chooseth rather the fire; nay, in the same plant, the bee feedeth on the flower, the bird on the seed, the sheep on the blade, and the swine on the root; and what is the reason of all this, but because nature must have its rest and delight from that only which is suitable to its own appetite and desire. Hence it is that though God be so perfect a good, yet he is not the happiness of evil men or evil angels, for he is not suitable to their vitiated, depraved natures. The carnal mind, which beareth sway in unregenerate men, is enmity against God, and devils are as contrary to God's nature as fire is to water. Hence it is that spiritual men place and enjoy happiness in the Father of spirits, because he is the savoury meat which their souls love. Though the sinner can live upon dregs, as the swine on dung, yet the saint must have refined spirits, and nothing less than angels' food and delights.

It is an unquestionable truth, that nothing can give true comfort to man but that which hath a relation and beareth a proportion to his highest and noblest part, his immortal soul; for his sensitive faculties were created in him, to be subordinate and serviceable to their master, reason; therefore he is excelled in them by his inferiors, as the eagle in seeing, and the hound in scenting; nature aiming at some more sublime and excellent design, the perfection of the rational part in those lower particulars was less exact; therefore the blessed God alone being a suitable good to the heavenly spiritual soul of man, can only satisfy it. Philosophers tell us the reason of the iron's cleaving to, and resting in the loadstone is, be-

[1] Aristot. Eth., lib. x. cap. 7.

cause the pores of both bodies are alike; so there are effluxes and emanations that slide through them and unite them together. One cause of the saint's love to, and delight in God, is his likeness to God. Creatures are earthly, the soul is heavenly; they are corporeal, the soul is spiritual; therefore, as when friends are contrary in disposition, the soul cannot take up its rest and happiness in their fruition; but God is suitable, and therefore satisfying: 'I am God all-sufficient,' Gen. xvii. 1. Some derive the word *Shaddai*, almighty, all-sufficient, from *shad*, a dug; for as the breast is suitable to the babe, nothing else will quiet it, so is God to his children.

A man that is hungry finds his stomach still craving. Something he wants, without which he cannot be well. Give him music, company, pictures, houses, honours, yet there follows no satisfaction, (these are not suitable to his appetite,) still his stomach craves; but set before this man some wholesome food, and let him eat, and his craving is over. 'They did eat, and were filled,' Neh. ix. 25. So it is with man's soul as with his body; the soul is full of cravings and longings, spending itself in sallies out after its proper food. Give it the credit, and profits, and pleasures of the world, and they cannot abate its desire; it craves still, (for these do not answer the soul's nature, and therefore cannot answer its necessity;) but once set God before it, and it feeding on him, it is satisfied; its very inordinate, dogged appetite after the world is now cured.[1] He, tasting this manna, tramples on the onions of Egypt: 'He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst,' John iv.

CHAPTER XII.

God the saint's happiness, because of his eternity, and the saint's propriety in him.

God is a permanent good. That which makes a man happy must be immortal, like himself. As man is rational, so he is a provident creature, desirous to lay up for hereafter; and this forecast reacheth beyond the fool's in the Gospel for many years, even for millions of ages, for ever, by laying hold on eternal life. He

[1] O miserabilis humana conditio, et sine Christo vanum omne quod vivimus.—*Jerome, Epit. Nep.*, tom. i. p. 25.

naturally desires an immortality of being, (whence that inclination in creatures, say philosophers, of propagating their kind,) and therefore an eternity of blessedness. The soul can enjoy no perfection of happiness if it be not commensurate to its own duration; for the greater our joy is in the fruition of any good, the greater our grief in its omission. Eternity is one of the fairest flowers in the glorified saint's garland of honour. It is an eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. Were the triumphant spirits ever to put off their crown of life, the very thought thereof would be death, and, like leaven, would sour the whole lump of their comforts. The perpetuity of their state adds infinitely to their pleasure: 'We shall ever be with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17. Here they have many a sweet bait, but there God will be their standing dish, never off the heavenly table.

The creature cannot make man happy, because, as it is not able to fill him, so it is not fast to him; like the moon in the increase, it may shine a little the former part of the night, but is down before morning. Man is not sure to hold them whilst he liveth.[1] How often is the candle of outward comforts blown out by a sudden blast of providence! Many, as Naomi, go out full, but come home empty; some disaster or other, as a thief, meets them by the way, and robs them of their deified treasure. The vessel in which all of some men's wealth is embarked, while it spreadeth fair with its proud sails, and danceth along upon the surging waters, when the factor in it is pleasing himself with the kind salutes he shall receive from his merchant for making so profitable a voyage, is in an instant swallowed up of unseen quicksands, and delivereth its freight at another port, and to an unknown master. Those whose morning hath been sunshiny and clear, have met with such showers before night as have washed away their wealth. However, if these comforts continue all day, at the night of death (as false lovers serve men in extremity) they leave us the knife of death, which stabs the sinner to the heart, lets out the blood and spirits of all his joys and happiness. But God is the true happiness of the soul, because he is an eternal good. As this sun hath no mists, so it never sets, so that the rest of the soul in God is an eternal Sabbath; like the New Jerusalem, it knoweth no night. Outward mercies, in which most place their felicity, are like land-floods, which swell high, and make a great noise, but are quickly in again, when the blessed God, like the spring-head, runneth over, and runneth ever.

[1] Lætitia sæculi cum magna expectatione speratur ut veniat, et non potest teneri cum venit.—*Aug.*, Tract. 7 in Job.

Fourthly, Because of the saints' propriety in this good. Though God be never so perfect, suitable, sure a good, yet it is little comfort to them that have no interest in him. Another man's health will not make me happy when sick. What happiness hath a beggar in the shady walks, pleasant garden, stately buildings, curious rooms, costly furniture, and precious jewels of an earl, when they are none of his? A crown and sceptre may be as suitable to the nature of a subject as a sovereign, yet the comfort of them extends not to the former, for want of this propriety in them. The leaving out one word in a will may mar the estate and disappoint all a man's hopes; the want of this one word, *my* (God,) is the wicked man's loss of heaven, and the dagger which will pierce his heart in hell to all eternity. The degree of satisfaction in any good is according to the degree of our union to it, (hence our delight is greater in food than in clothes, and the saint's joy is greater in God in the other world than in this, because the union is nearer;) but where there is no propriety there is no union, therefore no complacency. Now this all-sufficient, suitable, and eternal God is the saint's peculiar portion, and therefore causeth infinite satisfaction: 'God is my portion for ever. God, even our God, shall bless us,' Ps. lxvii. 6. The pronoun *my* is as much worth to the soul as the boundless portion. All our comfort is locked up in that private cabinet. Wine in the glass doth not cheer the heart, but taken down into the body. The propriety of the psalmist's in God was the mouth whereby he fed on those dainties which did so exceedingly delight him. No love potion was ever so effectual as this pronoun. When God saith to the soul, as Ahab to Benhadad, 'Behold, I am thine, and all that I have,' who can tell how the heart leaps with joy in, and expires almost in desires after him upon such news! Others, like strangers, may behold his honour and excellencies, but this saint only, like the wife, enjoyeth him. Luther saith, Much religion lieth in pronouns. All our consolation, indeed, consisteth in this pronoun. It is the cup which holdeth all our cordial waters. I will undertake, as bad as the devil is, he shall give the whole world, were it in his power, more freely than ever he offered it to Christ for his worship, for leave from God to pronounce those two words, MY GOD. All the joys of the believer are hung upon this one string; break that asunder, and all is lost. I have sometimes thought how David rolls it as a lump of sugar under his tongue, as one loath to lose its sweetness too soon: 'I love thee, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, my buckler, the

horn of my salvation, and my high tower,' Ps. xviii. 1, 2. This pronoun is the door at which the King of saints entereth into our hearts, with his whole train of delights and comforts.

CHAPTER XIII.

The first use, The difference betwixt a sinner and a saint in distress.

This doctrine may be useful by way of inference, and by way of trial and counsel, and by way of comfort.

First, If the comfort of a Christian in his saddest estate be this, namely, that God is his portion, it informeth us of the difference betwixt a sinner and a saint, both in their conditions when trouble comes, and in their portions.

1. In their conditions when in affliction.

The saint, in the sharpest winter, sits at a good fire. When abused by strangers he can complain to, and comfort himself in, his Father. Though stars vanish out of sight, he can rejoice in the sun. Like the prudent dame, whithersoever he travelleth, knowing how liable he is to fainting fits, he carrieth his bottle of strong waters along with him: 'When thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee,' Isa. xliii. But the sinner, when a storm comes upon his head, hath no cover. When a qualm comes over his heart, he hath no cordial, for he hath no God: Eph. ii. 12, 'Without God, without hope, strangers to the covenant of promise.' A godless man is hopeless. If he be robbed of his estate, and have little in hand, his case is dreadful, for he hath less in hope. The promises are the clefts of the rock whither true doves fly, and places of shelter where they are safe from ravenous fowls; but he is a stranger to these. When the floods comes he hath no ark, but must sink like lead in the midst of the mighty waters.

The godly man, in the lowest ebb of creatures, may have a high tide of comforts, because he hath ever the God of all consolations. As Jezebel's idolatrous priests, so in the greatest outward famine God entertaineth his people at his own table, and surely that is neither mean nor sparing. As their afflictions abound, their consolations by Christ superabound, 2 Cor. i. 5. The world layeth on crosses, and Christ layeth in comforts. Men make grievous sores, and God provides precious salves. 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him,' Lam. iii. 24. If you mind the season, you may a little admire at the church's solace. The

whole book is but a pathetical description of her tragical condition, and is generally concluded to be written by Jeremiah in the time of the Babylonish captivity, when her land was wasted, her people enslaved, her sabbaths ceased, and her temple profaned; yet this bird of paradise sings in a cage, and in this hard winter, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.'

The godly man may be robbed of his possessions, but he is well so long as he hath his happiness, his portion. Lazarus was happy when (*sine domo*, because he was not *sine Domino*) without goods, because he was not without God. As he in Plutarch said of the Scythians, Though they had neither wine nor music, yet they had the gods. The prophet, when the ponds were dried up, fetched his water from the fountain: Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in the God of my salvation.' It is considerable that he expresseth not only things for conveniency, as the vine and fig-tree, but things for necessity, as the meat of the field, and flocks of the stall, and supposeth the total loss of both; yet, in the want and absence of such comforts of life, he supports himself with God, the life of all his comforts. But the ungodly is not so. When afflictions come, they hit him upon the bare, for he is without armour. He is as a naked man in the midst of venomous serpents and stinging scorpions. When troubles come like so many lions, they tear the silly lamb in pieces, having none to protect him. 'I am greatly distressed,' saith Saul; and well he might, 'for the Philistines are upon me, and God is departed from me,' 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. Alas! poor soul, had the Philistines been his burden, and God strengthened his back, all had been well; he might have gone lightly under it. But when enemies approached, and God departed, he must needs be greatly distressed. The creature may well be full of frights and fears that stands in the open fields where bullets fly thick and fast, without any shelter or defence. David's foes had proved their conclusion to the full had their medium been true: 'Persecute and take him; for God hath forsaken him,' Ps. lxxi. 11. If God leave a man, dangers and devils may quickly find him. No wonder that Micah cried out so mournfully, 'Ye have taken away my gods, and do you ask me what I ail?' at the loss of his false gods; much more will the loss of the true God make men mournful. As it was said of Coniah, 'Write this man childless,' Jer. xxii. 30, it may be said of every godless

man, Write this man comfortless, helpless, hopeless, and that for ever.

Vast is the difference betwixt the case of the good and bad in distress: the former, as clothes dyed in grain, may keep his colour in all weathers; the latter, like quicksilver, may well be ever in motion, and, like a leaf, tremble at the smallest wind. Naturalists observe this difference between eagles and other birds [; when they] are in want and distress, they make a pitiful noise; but the eagle, when in straits, hath no such mournful note, but mounteth aloft, and refresheth herself with the warm beams of the sun. Saints, like true eagles, when they are in necessity, mount up to God upon the wings of faith and prayer, and delight themselves with the golden rays and gracious influences of his favour; but the sinner, if bereft of outward comforts, dolefully complains. The snail, take him out of his shell, and he dieth presently. The godless person is like the ferret, which hath its name in Hebrew from squeaking and crying, because he squeaketh sadly if taken from his prey. When the godly man, (as Paulinus Molanus, when his city was plundered by the barbarians,) though he be robbed of his earthly riches, hath a treasure in heaven, and may say, *Domine, ne excrucier ob aurum et argentum; tu enim mihi es omnia*, Lord, why should I be disquieted for my silver and gold? for thou to me art all things. Having nothing, yet he possesseth all things, 2 Cor. vi. 10.

CHAPTER XIV.

The difference betwixt the portions of gracious and graceless persons in this world.

2. It informeth us of the difference in their portions. The wicked man hath a portion of goods: 'Father, give me the portion of goods which belongeth to me,' Luke xv. 12. But the godly man only hath the good portion. I shall instance in three particulars, wherein the portion in this world of a sinner differeth from the saints.

First, Their portion is poor. It consisteth in toys and trifles, like the estate of mean women in the city, who make a great noise in crying their ware, which is only a few points, or pins, or matches. But the portion of a saint lieth, though he do not proclaim it about the streets, as the rich merchant's, in staple commodities and jewels. The worldling's portion at best is but a little airy honour, or empty pleasure, or beggarly treasure. But the Christian's is the beautiful

image of God, the incomparable covenant of grace, the exceeding rich and precious promises of the gospel, the inestimable Saviour, and the infinitely blessed God. The sinner's portion is nothing: 'Ye have rejoiced in a thing of nought,' Amos vi. 13; a fashion, a fancy, 1 Cor. vii. 30; Acts xxv. 23. But the saint's portion is all things: 'All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. As Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines, and sent them away, but he gave all he had to Isaac, so God giveth common gifts of riches, or friends, or credit, to wicked men, which is all they crave, and sendeth them away, and they are well contented; but he gives grace, glory, his Spirit, his Son, himself, all he hath, to his Isaacs, to the children of the promise, Gen. xxv. 5, 6. He giveth earth into the hands of the wicked, Job ix. 24; all their portion lieth in dust, rubbish, and lumber; all they are worth is a few ears of corn, which they glean here and there in the field of this world. But he giveth heaven into the hearts of the godly; their portion consisteth in gold, and silver, and diamonds, the peculiar treasure of kings, in the love of God, the blood of Christ, and the pleasures at his right hand for evermore. Others, like servants, have a little meat, and drink, and wages; but saints, like sons, they are a congregation of the first-born, and have the inheritance. Oh the vast difference betwixt the portion of the prodigal and the pious! The former hath something given him by God, as Peninnah had by Elkanah, though at last it will appear to be little better than nothing, when he gives the latter, as Elkanah did Hannah, a goodly, a worthy portion, because he loves them, 1 Sam. i. 4, 5.

Secondly, Their portion is piercing. As it is compared to broken cisterns for its vanity, so to thorns for its vexation, Jer. ii. 13; Mat. xiii. 22. A sinner layeth the heavy lumber of his earthly portion on his heart, and that must needs oppress it with care, and fear, and many sorrows; whereas the saint's portion, the fine linen of his Saviour's righteousness, lying next his flesh, is soft and pleasing. 'The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep,' Eccles. v. 12. His portion hinders his peace; his riches set him upon a rack; his cruelty in getting it, his care to increase it, and the secret curse of God accompanying it, do, like the importunate widow, allow him no rest day or night; when the godly man's portion makes his bed easy, lays his pillow soft, and covers him warm: 'I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety.' Nay, such an excellent sleeping pill is this portion, that, by the virtue of it, David, when he was pursued by his unnatural son, and

was in constant danger of death, when he had the earth for his bed, the trees for his curtains, the stars for his candles, and the heavens for his canopy, could sleep as sweetly, as soundly as ever he did on his bed of down in his royal palace at Jerusalem. 'Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head,' Ps. iii. 3. 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me,' Ps. iv. 8.

The sinner's portion is termed wind, Hosea viii. 7. If wind get into the bowels of the earth, it causeth concussions and earthquakes. His riches, and honours, and friends lie near him, are within him, and thereby cause much anxiety and disquietness of spirit. His portion, like windy fruit, fills his belly with pains. It is smoke in his eyes, gravel in his teeth, wind in his stomach, and gripes in his bowels. The saint's part is his joy and delight:[1] 'Then shall I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy,' Ps. xliii. 4. It is music to his ears, beauty to his eyes, sweet odours to his scent, honey to his taste, and melody to his heart: 'In the presence of his portion is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. He sits at an inward heart-cheering feast in the greatest outward famine, when the worldling in the midst of his gaudy show of wealth is but a book fairly gilt without, consisting of nothing but tragedies within. His portion is too narrow a garment than that he can wrap himself in it, and too short a bed than that he can stretch himself on it.

The vanity of the sinner's portion makes it full of vexation to him; because it cannot fill him, therefore it frets him. 'In the midst of his sufficiency he is in straits,' Job xx. 22. Though his table be never so well spread, he hath not a heart to use it, but pineth himself with fear of poverty, and runneth hither and thither, up and down like a beggar, to this and that door of the creature for some poor scraps and small dole. He may possess many pounds, and not enjoy one penny, Eccles. vi. 2.

But the portion of the saint affords him a comfortable subsistence. Though the whole be not paid him till he come to full age, yet the interest of it, which is allowed him in his minority, affordeth him such an honourable maintenance that he needs not borrow of his servants, nor be beholden to his beggarly neighbours. He hath enough constantly about him to live upon, and therefore may spare his frequent walk to the creature's shop for a supply of his wants.[2]

[1] Sine Deo omnis copia est egestas.—*Bern.*

[2] Tantum habet quantum vult, qui nihil vult nisi quid habet.—*Seneca.*

Thirdly, Their portion is perishing. This fire of thorns at which carnal men warm their hands—for it cannot reach the heart—after a small blaze and little blustering noise, goeth out. Carnal comforts, like comets, appear for a time, and then vanish; when the portion of a saint, like a true star, is fixed and firm. A worldling's wealth lieth in earth, and therefore, as wares laid in low, damp cellars, corrupts and moulders; but the godly man's treasure is in heaven, and, as commodities laid up in high rooms, continueth sound and safe. Earthly portions are often like guests which stay for a night and away; but the saints' portion is an inhabitant that abides in the house with him for ever.

It is said of Gregory the Great, that he trembled every time he read or thought of that speech of Abraham to Dives, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime hadst thy good things,' Luke xvi. 25. To have his all in time, and nothing when he entered upon his eternity; to live like a prodigal one day, and be a beggar for ever: surely it was a sad saying. The flower sheds whilst the stalk remains; the sinner continues when his portion vanishes. The sinner's portion, like his servant, when he dieth, will seek a new master. 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: and then whose shall these things be?' Luke xii. 20. Whose? possibly the poor's, whom he had wronged and robbed to enrich himself. It may be his child's, who will scatter it as prodigally as he raked it together penuriously. But whosesoever it was, it could be none of his, and then, when parted from his portion, what a poor fool was he indeed! not worth a farthing. But the saint's wealth will accompany him into the other world. The truth is, that is the place where he receiveth his portion: 'Blessed are they that die in the Lord: they rest from their labours; and their works follow them,' Rev. xiv. 13.

When men go a great journey, as beyond the seas, they carry not their tables, or bedsteads, or any such heavy luggage and lumber along with them, but their silver, and gold, and jewels. When the sinner goeth the way of all the earth, he leaves his portion behind him, because it consists wholly in lumber; but the saint's portion consisting wholly in things of value—in wisdom, which is better than silver, and grace, which is more worth than pure gold, and in God, who is more precious than rubies, and all that can be desired is not to be compared to him—he carrieth all along with him.

It is said of Dathan and his companions, that the earth swallowed them up, and their houses, and all that appertained to them; so

when the earth shall at death swallow up his person, it will also, as to his use, swallow up his portion, Num. xvi. 33.

This whole world must pass away, and what then will become of the sinner's portion? Surely he may cry out, as they of Moab, 'Woe to me! I am undone,' Num. xxi. 29. But even at that day the saint may sing and be joyful at heart; for till then he shall not know the full value of his inheritance.

It is as sad a speech as most in Scripture, 'whose portion is in this life,' Ps. xvii. 14. All their estate lieth, as the Reubenites', on this side Canaan.

CHAPTER XV.

The difference betwixt the sinner's and saint's portion in the other world.

But there is a further difference betwixt the portion of a sinner and saint; and still the farther we go, the worse it is for the one, and the better for the other; and that is in the other world.

The sinner's portion here, as poor as it is, is a comparative heaven; but there a real hell. Their portion is cursed on earth, but what is it then in hell? Job xxiv. 18. 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this is the portion of their cup,' Ps. xi. 6. The words are an allusion to the Jewish custom at meals, wherein every one had his allotted portion of drink, his peculiar cup, Gen. xliii. 34. Suitable to which the godly man can tell you what nectar and nepenthe he shall meet with, when he sits down at that banquet from which he shall never rise up. 'The Lord is the portion of my cup: thou maintainest my lot,' Ps. xvi. 5.

But look a little into the sinner's cup, and see what a bitter potion is prepared for him. I think we shall scarce find a drop in it, but is infinitely worse than poison. Reader, take heed thou never come to taste it. It is indeed a mixture of such ingredients as may make the stoutest heart alive to tremble and faint away if it come but within the scent or sight of it. Snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. The Lord poured on the Egyptians such a 'grievous rain, as had not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof,' Exod. ix. 18; but this potion of the sinner is far more bitter than that plague. Pliny tells us, that amongst the Romans, when M. Acilius and C. Porcius were consuls, it

rained blood;[1] but what is that to fire and brimstone? Observe, first, The extremity of pain which will be caused by this potion: 'Upon the wicked he shall rain fire and brimstone.' Fire is dreadful to our flesh, though it be but applied outwardly. What miserable torment did Charles the Second, king of Navarre, endure, when he was burnt to death in a flaming sheet steeped in *aqua vitæ!*[2] but much greater torment will it cause when taken inward. Fire in the belly, in the bowels, will pain the creature to purpose. The inward parts are more tender, and so more liable to torture. But this drink, like poison, will diffuse itself also into all the parts, that none shall be free from pain. It was an unknown punishment which the drunken Turk underwent, when, by the command of the Basha, he had a cup of boiling lead poured down his throat: who can think what he felt? But sure I am, as bad as it was, it was but a flea-bite to this cup of fire which the Lord hath prepared for the sinner, fire and brimstone. Fire is terrible of itself, but brimstone makes it to burn with much greater violence; besides, brimstone added to the cup of fire will make it of a most stinking savour. The sinner now burneth in lust, but then in a flaming fire; now he drinketh his pleasant juleps, but then his loathsome potion. Fire is the most furious of all elements: nothing in this life is more dreadful to nature; but our fires are but like painted ones to true, in comparison of this rain of fire in hell. Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, though heated seven times more than ordinary, was cool to this fire. Oh who can fry in such a flame as the breath of an infinite God doth kindle![3] Fire and brimstone. Three drops of brimstone, saith one, lighting on any part of our bodies, will make us cry and roar out for pain. What then will befall the sinner, when he shall both ever drink and ever live in this lake of fire and brimstone; when he shall drink this cup of pure wrath, of poisonous dregs, of fire and brimstone, though there be eternity to the bottom! 'Who can dwell in everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14.

Observe, secondly, The certainty of the punishment. 'Upon the wicked he shall rain a horrible tempest.' Some read it a whirlwind, a horrible blasting whirlwind, which carrieth all before it; but it is properly, saith Ainsworth, a hideous burning tempest, named by the Greeks ἐυρυκλύδων, Acts xxvii. 14. It is an allusion to the boisterous wind *turbo*, which casteth down and overthroweth

[1] Plin. Nat. Hist., lib. ii. cap. 56.

[2] Heyl. Geogr., p. 42.

[3] Damnati exquisitissimos dolores sentiunt, quibus majores nec dari nec cogitari possunt.—*Gerh. loc. com.*

all that is near it; which, as it is hot and fiery, is named *prester*, and burneth and layeth along whatsoever it toucheth and encountereth.[1] The sinner thinketh that he is sure, but this horrible tempest will overturn him. His squeasy stomach, used to rich wines, nauseates this loathsome nasty water. When God puts this cup into his hand, oh how his heart will rise against it! but he shall be forced to drink off this cup of fire and boiling brimstone, whether he will or no.

Observe, thirdly, The suddenness of this plague and potion: 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.' When they are asleep and little dream of it, then this horrible tempest stealeth them away in the night, Job xxvii. 20. What a doleful screech and dreadful cry will this cause, (as amongst the Egyptians at midnight, Exod. xii. 30.) Snares take men at unawares. The sinner's woe shall come without warning. 'As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it cometh suddenly upon them,' Eccles. ix. 12. The fish looks for a good bait when it is caught by the hook; the bird expects meat in the snare in which it is taken and murdered. When Abner expected a kiss, a kind salute, behold, then he meets with a sword which kills him. When Belshazzar was carousing in his cups, and his head full of wine, then the cup of trembling is given him by the handwriting on the wall. When the sinner, like the dolphin, is leaping merrily, then he is nearest his endless misery. 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.' When it rains he expects silver showers to refresh him, but lo! gins and snares to entrap him. The wicked man's cloud drops not fatness, but fury and fire.

Now, let us cast up the account, and see what the worldling's portion amounts to, and how much he will be worth in the other world. The liquor in his cup is most painful and loathsome, fire and brimstone. All his estate lieth in the valley of the shadow of death. Scalding lead were a wonderful favour, if he might drink that instead of boiling brimstone. No heart can conceive what a terrible potion that is, which a God boundless in wisdom, power, and anger, doth prepare. Yet though it be dreadful, if it were doubtful, the sinner's grief would not be so great;

[1] Videtur significare ventos urentes, quales illi in Africa, qui arenas ardentes calore solis excitant, et homines involutos ita adurunt, quasi igne corpora essent tosta, Alii vertunt spiritum procellarum seu turbinum, quia procellosis ventis excitantur tempestates, quas postea sequitur fulminatio, cujus hic est descriptio.—*Moller. in loc.*, vide *Calv. in loc.*

but as the liquor is most loathsome, so the cup is most certain. God will pour this dreadful drench down his throat. He cannot abide it, neither can he avoid it. Infinite power will hold his person, whilst infinite anger gives him this potion. And it is not the least aggravation of his sorrows that they shall come on a sudden. This rain of fire and brimstone, which will cause such matchless mourning, will come, as on Sodom, when it is least expected, after a sunshiny morning.

But there is one thing more in the cup, which, beyond all the former, makes it infinitely bitter, and that is this, it is bottomless,[1] Luke viii. 31. The sinner's fire is eternal, and the smoke of his brimstone ascendeth for ever and ever, Jude 7; Rev. xiv. 11. If a purging potion, which is soon down, and in some few hours out of his body, go so much against the hair with him, what wry mouths and angry faces will he make when he shall come to drink this bottomless cup of fire and brimstone! His cup is like the ocean, which can never be fathomed. This rain may well be called wrath to come, for it will be ever to come, and never overcome. His darkest night here may have a morning; but there his portion will be blackness of darkness for ever. There will be no end of his misery, no exit to his tragedy. He will be fettered in those chains of everlasting darkness, and feel the terrors of an eternal death.

But the portion of a saint is, like the wine which Christ provided for the wedding, best at last; he shall never know its full worth till he appears in the other world, and then he shall find, that as money answereth all things, so his portion will protect him from all misery, and fill him with all felicities, and answer all the desires and necessities of his capacious and immortal soul.

The cup which he shall drink of is filled out of the rivers of God's own pleasures; and how sweet that wine is, none can tell but they who have tasted it. The thought of it hath recovered those who have been dying, and recalled them to life; what then will a draught of it do? All the men in the world cannot describe the rich viands and various dainties which God hath for his own provided diet: nay, the most skilful cherubim can never count nor cast up the total of a saint's personal estate. Till angels can acquaint us with the vast millions that the boundless God is worth, they cannot tell us the utmost of a saint's portion.

It is said of Shusa, in Persia, that it was so rich that, saith Cassiodorus, the stones were joined together with gold, and in it Alex-

[1] Prima mors animam dolentem pellit de corpore, secunda mors animam nolentem tenet in corpore.—*Aug de Civit. Dei*, lib. xxi. cap. 32.

ander found seventy thousand talents of gold. This city if you can take, saith Aristagoras to his soldiers, you may vie with Jove himself for riches. But what a beggarly place is this to the new Jerusalem, where pure gold is the pavement trampled under the citizens' feet, and the walls all of precious pearls; who entereth that city may vie with thousands of such monarchs as this world can make, and with all those heathenish gods for riches. The infinite God, *quantus quantus est*, as boundless a good as he is, to whom heaven and earth is less than nothing, is their portion for ever. But of this more in some of the following chapters.

CHAPTER XVI.

A use of trial, whether God be our portion or no, with some marks.

The doctrine may be useful by way of trial. If the comfort of a Christian in his saddest condition be, that God is his portion, then, reader, examine thyself whether God be thy portion or no. I must tell thee, the essence and heart of religion consisteth in the choice of thy portion; nay, thy happiness dependeth wholly upon thy taking of the blessed God for thine utmost end and chiefest good; therefore if thou mistakest here, thou art lost for ever.

I shall try thee very briefly by the touchstone which Christ hath prepared: 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,' Mat. vi. 21. Now, friend, where is thy heart? is it in earth? is it a diamond set in lead, or a sparkling star fixed in heaven? Are thy greatest affections, like Saul's person, among the stuff and rubbish of this world? or do they, like Moses, go up into the mount and converse with God? Do they, with the worms, crawl here below? or, like the eagle, soar aloft, and dwell above? A man that hath his portion on earth, like the earth, moveth downward, though he may be thrown upward by violence, as a stone, by some sudden conviction, or the like; yet that impressed virtue is soon worn out, and he falleth to the earth again. But he who hath his portion in heaven, like fire, tendeth upward ordinarily, though, through the violence of temptation, he may, as fire by the wind, be forced downward; yet, that removed, he ascendeth again.

It may be, when thine enemy death beats thee out of the field of life, thou wilt be glad of a God, to which thou mayest retire, as a city of refuge, to shelter thee from the murdering piece of the law's curse; but what thoughts hast thou of him now, whilst thou hast

the world at will? Dost thou count the fruition of him thy chiefest felicity? Is one God infinitely more weighty in the scales of thy judgment than millions of worlds? Dost thou say, in thy prevailing settled judgment, of them that have their garners full and their flocks fruitful, 'Blessed is the people that is in such a case; or yea, rather happy is the people whose God is the Lord,' Ps. cxliv. 13-15.

Every man esteemeth his portion at a high price. Naboth valueth his earthly inheritance above his life, and would rather die than part with it at any rate. 'God forbid that I should sell the inheritance of my fathers,' saith he. Oh the worth of the blessed God, in the esteem of him that hath him for his portion! His house, land, wife, child, liberty, life, are hated by him, and nothing to him in comparison of his portions; he would not exchange his hopes of it and title to it for the dominion and sovereignty of the whole world. If the devil, as to Christ, should set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and shew all the honours, and pleasures, and treasures of the world, and say to him, All this I will give thee, if thou wilt sell thy portion and fall down and worship me; who can tell with what infinite disdain he would reject such an offer? He would say, as a tradesman that were bid exceedingly below the worth of his wares, You were as good bid me nothing, and with much scorn and laughter refuse his tender. This man is elevated to the top of the celestial orbs, and therefore the whole earth is but a point in his eye; whereas a man who hath his portion in outward things, who dwelleth here on earth, heavenly things are little, the glorious sun itself is but small, in such a man's eye, earthly things are great in his esteem.

Reader, let me persuade thee to be so much at leisure as to ask thy soul two or three questions.

1. In what channel doth the stream of thy desires run? Which way and to what coast do these winds of thy soul drive? Is it towards God, or towards the world? A rich heir in his minority, kept under by tutors and guardians, longs for the time when he shall be at age, and enjoy the privilege and pleasures of his inheritance. Thou cravest, and thirsteth, and longest, and desirest; something there is which thou wouldst have, and must have, and canst not be satisfied till thou hast it. Now what is it? Is it the husks of this world, which thou inquirest so earnestly for somebody to give thee? or is it bread in thy Father's house which thou hungerest after? Dost thou pant after the dust of the earth, according to the prophet's phrase? Amos ii. 7; or with the church: 'The desire of my

soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee!' Thou art hungry and thirsty, unquiet, unsatisfied; what is the matter, man? Dost thou, like the dry earth, gape and cleave for showers to bring forth corn and wine? Is the voice of thy heart, 'Who will shew us any good'? or is it, 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance on us'? Physicians can judge considerably of the state of their patients' bodies by their appetites; they who long only for trash speak their stomachs to be foul; they who hunger after wholesome food are esteemed to be in health. Thou mayest judge of the state of thy soul by thy desires; if thou desirest chiefly the trash of the world, thy spiritual state is not right, thy heart is not right in the sight of God; if thou canst say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee,' blessed art thou of the Lord; thou hast a part and lot in this boundless portion. Observe, therefore, friend, which way these wings of thy soul, thy desires, fly. He who thirsteth after the kennel water of this world hath no right to the pure river of the water of life; but he who hungereth after the dainties of the Lamb's supper, may be sure the scraps of this beggarly world are not his happiness. The true wife longeth for the return of her husband, but the false one careth not how long he is absent.

2. What is the feast at which thou sittest with most delight? Is it at a table furnished with the comforts of this world? Are the dishes of credit and profit, of relations and possessions, those which thou feedest on with most pleasure? Or is it a table spread with the image of God, the favour of God, the Spirit of God, and the Son of God? Are those the savoury meat which thy soul loveth?

If this Sun of righteousness only causeth day in thine heart when he ariseth; and if he be set, notwithstanding all the candles of creatures, it is still night with thee, then God is thy portion. Oh how glad is the young heir when he comes to enjoy his portion! With what delight will he look over his woods, view his grounds, and walk in his gardens. The Roman would tumble naked in his heaps of silver, out of delight in them; but if thy affections only overflow with joy, as the water of Nilus, in the time of wheat harvest, when the world floweth in upon thee, the world is thy portion. He who like a lark sings merrily, not on the ground, but when he is mounting up to heaven, is rich indeed. God is his; but he who like a horsefly delighteth in dunghills, feedeth most on, and relisheth best these earthly offals, is a poor man; God is none of his God; it is an undeniable truth, that that is our portion which is the paradise of our pleasures. The fool who could expect

ease on his bed of thorns—'Soul take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years'—had his portion in this life; but Moses, whom nothing could please but God's gracious presence, had him for his portion: 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence; I beseech thee shew me thy glory.'

Thirdly, What is the calling which thou followest with greatest eagerness and earnestness? Men run and ride, and toil and moil all day, they rise early, and go to bed late, and take any pains for that which they count their happiness and portion. The worldling, whose element is earth, whose portion consisteth, like the pedlar's pack, in a few pins, or needles, or pewter spoons, or brass bodkins, how will he fare mean, lodge hard, sleep little, crowd into a corner, hazard his health and life and soul too, for that which he counteth his portion; like a brutish spaniel, he will follow his master, the world, some hundred of miles, puffing and blowing, breaking through hedges, and scratching himself with thorns and briers, running through ponds of water and puddles of dirt, and all for a few bones or scraps, which is all his hope and happiness. The Christian, who hath the blessed God for his portion, strives and labours, and watcheth and prayeth, and weepeth, and thinks no time too much, no pains too great, no cost enough for the enjoyment of his God. As the wise merchant, he would part with all he hath, all his strength and health, all his relations and possessions, for his noble portion. Reader, how is it with thee? thou travellest too and fro, thou weariest thyself, and wantest thy rest, thy head is full of cares, and thy heart of fears, and thy hands are always active; but whither doth all this tend? What is the market to which thou art walking thus fast? Is it gold that thou pursuest so hot? 'The people labour in the fire, and weary themselves for very vanity,' Hab. ii. 13. Or is it God that thou pressest after—as the hound the hare, so the word signifieth, Phil. iii. 12, διωκω—with so much diligence and violence: 'My soul followeth hard after thee,' Ps. lxiii. 8. Thus have I laid down the characters briefly of such as have God for their portion. Thy business is to be faithful in the trial of thine estate.

If upon trial thou findest that God is thy portion, rejoice in thy privilege, and let thy practices be answerable. Like a rich heir, delight thyself in the thoughts of thy vast inheritance. Can he be poor that is master of the mint? Canst thou be miserable who hast God for thy portion? I must tell thee that thou art happy in spite of men and devils. If worldlings take such pleasure in their counters and brass farthings, what joy mayest thou have in

God, to whom all the Indians' mines are worse than dross! Nay, if all the gold of Ophir, and of the whole world, were melted into one common stream; and all the pearls and precious stones lay on the side of it as thick as pebbles, and the quintessence and excellencies of all other the creatures were crumbled into sand, and lay at the bottom of this channel, they were not worthy to make a metaphor of, to set forth the least perfection in this portion. Shall Esau say he hath enough, and be contented, when the narrow field of some creatures was the utmost bounds of his estate? And wilt thou complain as if thou wert pinched with poverty, when the boundless God is thy portion? Art not thou an unreasonable creature, whom the infinite God will not satisfy? For shame, Christian; bethink thyself, and let the world know by thy cheerfulness and comfort, that their mites are nothing to thy millions. Consider, though the whole world turn bankrupt, thou art rich; for thy estate doth not lie in their hands. Do not pine thyself, therefore, with fear of penury, but keep a house according to thy estate which will afford it, in the greatest plenty. Let thy practices also be suitable to thy portion. Great heirs have a far different carriage from the poor, who take alms of the parish. Thou oughtest to live above the world. Eagles must not stoop to catch flies; the stars which are nearest the pole have least circuit. Thou who art so near God needest not wander about this world, but shouldst live as one whose hope and happiness is in a better world. When one was asked whether he did not admire the admirable structure of some stately building. No, saith he, for I have been at Rome, where better are to be seen every day. If the world tempt thee with its rare sights, and curious prospects, thou mayest well scorn them, having been in heaven, and being able by faith to see infinitely better every hour of the day; but if, upon examination, it be found that God is not thy portion, think of it seriously, thou art but a beggar; and if thou diest in this estate, shalt be so for ever. It may be thou art worth thousands in this world, but, alas! they stand for ciphers in the other world; how little will thy bags of silver in thy chest be worth, when thou enterest into thy coffin! It is reported of Musculus, that when he lay upon his death-bed, and many of his friends came to see him, and bewailed the poverty such an eminent minister of Christ was brought to, one of them said, *O quid sumus!* Musculus overheard him and cried out, *Fumus.* When thou comest to die, the whole world will be but air and smoke in thine own account. What, man, wilt thou do? Whither wilt thou go? The God that thou wilt cry to in distress,

weep, and sob, and sigh to at death, is none of thy God. Thou rejectest him now, and canst thou think that he will affect thee then? either make a new choice, or thou canst never enter into peace.

CHAPTER XVII.

An exhortation to men to choose God for their portion.

The third use which I shall make of this doctrine, shall be by way of exhortation. If the comfort of a Christian in his saddest condition be this, that God is his portion, let me then persuade thee, reader, to choose God for thy portion. I look on thee as rational, and accordingly shall treat thee in this use, not doubting, but if reason may be judge, I shall prevail with thee to repent of thy former, and resolve on a new choice. Thou art one who hast chosen the world for thy portion; but hast thou not read what a poor, what a pitiful, what a piercing, what a perishing portion it is? 'Why then dost thou spend thy strength for what is not bread, and thy labour for what will not satisfy? Hearken to me, and eat that which is good; and let thy soul delight itself in fatness.' I offer thee this day a portion worthy of thy choicest affections, a portion that, if thou acceptest, the richest emperors will be but beggars to thee, a portion which containeth more wealth than heaven and earth; nay, ten thousand worlds are nothing in comparison of this portion. If a man should offer thee a bag of gold, and a bag of counters, a bag of pearls, and a bag of sand, which wouldst thou choose? Surely the former. The world in comparison of God is infinitely less than brass to gold, or sand to pearls, and wilt thou not choose him for thy portion? Didst thou never laugh at children for their folly, in choosing rattles and babies before things of much greater worth? And art thou not a bigger child, and a greater fool, to choose husks before bread, a mess of pottage before the birthright, the blessing; to choose a seeming fancy before real felicities; a little honour, which is but a farthing candle, that children can puff out with one breath, and blow in with another blast, before the exceeding and eternal weight of glory? To choose broken cisterns before a fountain of living waters, dirt before diamonds, vanity before solidity, drops before the ocean, and nothing before all things? Man, where is thy reason? Samuel said to Saul, 'Set not thine heart on asses; for is not the desire of

all Israel to thee?' Friend, why shouldst thou set thy heart on asses, or thy flock, or shop, or any treasure, when thou hast the desire of all nations to set thine heart upon? As Christ said to the woman of Canaan, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldst ask of him, and he would give thee living water,' John iv. 10. So say I to thee, If thou knewest the blessed God, and who it is that is offered to thee, the sweetest love, the richest mercy, the surest friend, the chiefest good, the greatest beauty, the highest honour, and the fullest happiness, thou wouldst leave the colliers of this world to load themselves with thick clay, and turn merchant adventurer for the other world; thou wouldst more willingly leave these frothy joys and drossy delights for the enjoyment of God, than ever prisoner did the fetters, and bondage, and misery of a jail, for the liberty, and pleasures, and preferments of a court. Augustine speaks of a time when he and his mother were discoursing together of the comforts of the Spirit: Lord, saith he, thou knowest in that day how wisely we did esteem of the world, and all its delights. O reader, couldst thou but see the vastness, the suitableness, and the fulness of this portion, I am confident thou wouldst suffer the natives, the men of this world, Ps. xvii. 14, to mind the commodities which are of the growth of their own country, and wouldst fetch thy riches, as the good housewife her food, from far.

The cause of thy wrong choice (I mean thy taking the world all this while for thy portion) is thy ignorance of the worth and excellency of this object which I am offering to thee. It is in the dark that men grope so much about present things, 2 Pet. i. 9; knowing persons prefer wisdom before silver, before choice gold, nay, before rubies, Prov. iii. 14, 15. Every one will sell his heart to that chapman which biddeth most. Now the devil courts man for his soul with the brutish pleasures of sin; the world wooeth for the heart with its proffer of treasures and honours, which, like itself, are vain, vexatious, and perishing; God comes, and he offereth for the heart the precious blood of his Son, the curious embroidery of his Spirit, the noble employment and honourable preferment of angels, fulness of joy, and infiniteness of satisfaction, in the fruition of his blessed self to all eternity. Now what is the reason that the devil's money is accepted, and the world's offer embraced, and God's tender (which is farther superior to theirs than the glorious heavens, where the King of saints keeps his court, and sheweth all his state, and royalty, and magnificence, is to a stinking dunghill) should be rejected? Truly nothing but this: men know not the worth of

what God biddeth them for their wares. The money which the devil and world offer are their own country coin, and a little of this they sooner take, because they know it, than much more of another nation's, the value of which they do not understand. Swine trample on pearls, because they know not the worth of them. None look off the world but they that can look beyond it.

The turtle, saith the philosopher, brings forth her young blind. The most quick-sighted Christian brings forth blind children: now they, not being able to see afar off into the other world, prefer these poor things which they may have in present possession, before these unsearchable riches which are offered them in reversion. Hence it is also that the devil, as the raven when he seizeth the carcase, as soon as he layeth hold on any person, the first thing he doth is to peck out his eyes, Prov. xxx. 17, knowing that as soon as they come to see the blessed God, and the happiness which is to be enjoyed in him, they will quickly turn their backs on these shadows, and face about towards this eternal substance, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Oh how dull would the world's common glass be in his eye who had once beheld the true crystal! The loadstone of earth will not draw man's affections whilst this diamond of heaven is in presence. When Moses had once seen him that was invisible, how low did the price of the honours, and treasures, and pleasures of Egypt fall in his judgment! Knowledge is by one well expressed to be appetite's taster; for as he that hath eaten sweetmeats cannot relish the strongest beer, so he that hath fed on the heavenly banquet cannot savour anything else.

A man that is born in a dark dungeon, and there continueth a long time, when he comes, after twelve or fourteen years, to see a candle, he wonders at the excellency of that creature. What delight will he take in beholding it, and inquiring into the nature of it! But bring this man afterwards into the open air, and let him behold the glorious sun, his admiration of the candle will cease, and all his wonder will be at the beauty and glory of this great luminary of the world. Every man is naturally in darkness; hence it is that, when he comes to behold the candles of creature comforts, he is so ravished and taken with them; but let him once come to see the Sun of righteousness, the all-sufficient and eternal God, he despiseth those glimmering rushes, and all his wondering is at the excellency and perfections of this glorious being. That which was glorious before, hath now no glory in comparison of this glory that excelleth. All things are small and little in his eye who hath once had a sight of the great God. The great cities of Cam-

pania are but small cottages to them who stand on the top of the Alps.

Philosophers observe that *lumen est vehiculum influentiæ,* light is the convoy of heat. Certain it is, reader, that this light of knowledge would quickly cause heat in thy affections. Couldst thou but see God with an eye of faith, thine eye would so affect thine heart, that (as some who have beheld Mahomet's tomb have put out their eyes, lest they should be defiled with common objects after they have been blessed with so rare a sight) thou wouldst shut thine eyes at those gilded poisons, and wink ever after on those specious nothings. Couldst thou see this God as he is visible in the glass of the creatures; couldst thou compass the earth which he hath made, the several islands and continents which are in it; couldst thou, like the sun, so surround it as to see all the nations in it, their several languages, carriages, customs, their number, order, natures, and the creatures in every kingdom and country; the various plants, birds, minerals, beasts, and savage inhabitants in wildernesses, their multiplicity, variety, dispositions, subordination, and serviceableness each to other, and all that concerneth them; what thoughts wouldst thou then have of this God for a portion! Couldst thou behold at one view the vast ocean, discern the motion of the huge waters in the cause of its ebbing and flowing, all the storms and tempests which are there raised, and all the persons and goods which have been there ruined; couldst thou see how those proud waves are laid with a word; how, when they swell and rage, it is but, Peace, be still, Matt. viii., (as a mother will hush her crying infant,) and all is quiet! how they are kept in with bars and doors, and, for all their anger and power, cannot go beyond their decreed place; couldst thou dive into it, and see the many wonders that are in that great deep, the vast riches which are buried there out of the sight of covetous mortals; the leviathan, whose teeth are terrible round about him, whose scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal, by whose neezings a light doth shine, and whose eyes are the eyelids of the morning; whose breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth; who esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood; who maketh the deep to boil like a pot, and the sea like a pot of ointment! Couldst thou behold the innumerable fish, both small and great, that are there, good Lord, what wouldst thou think of having the author and commander of the earth and ocean for thy portion? Couldst thou ascend up to the sky, and fully perceive the beauty, glory, nature, and order of that heavenly host, how they march in

rank and file, come forth, when called, in their several courses, know the time of their rising and setting; couldst thou know the sun perfectly in his noonday dress, and what influences those higher orbs have on inferior bodies, what wouldst thou then give to enjoy him who gave them their beings, who appointeth them their motions, who knoweth the number of the stars, and who calleth them all by their names, for thy portion? But oh! were it possible for thee to hold aside the veil, and look into the holy of holies, to mount up to the highest heavens, and see the royal palace of this great King, the stately court which he there keeps, the noble entertainment which he there gives to his friends and children; couldst thou know the satisfying joy, the ravishing delight, and the unconceivable pleasure which the spirits of just men made perfect have in his favour and fruition; couldst thou see him as he is there visible (like a pure sweet light sparkling through a crystal lanthorn) in the glorified Redeemer, and know him as thou art known of him, then, then, reader, what wouldst thou think of this God for a portion? What poor apprehensions wouldst thou have of that beggarly portion which thou now admirest! what dung, what dogs'-meat would the world be to thee in comparison of this God! As Alexander, when he heard of the Indies, and the riches there, divided the kingdom of Macedonia amongst his captains, so thou wouldst leave the swine of the earth to wallow in the mire of brutish comforts, the foolish children of disobedience to paddle in the gutter of sensual waters; and wouldst desire that thy portion might be amongst God's children, and thy heritage amongst his chosen ones. Then, then, friend, all thy love would be too little, and no labour too great, wouldst thou think, for such a peerless and inestimable portion. How willingly should the Zibas of the world take all, so thy Lord and King would but come into thy soul in peace! How earnestly, how eagerly wouldst thou cry with Moses, after he had known somewhat of Canaan, 'O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' Lord, though others be put off with common bounty, let me partake of special mercy; though they feed on husks, give me this bread of life. Let me not for this whole world have my portion in this world, but be thou the portion of my cup; do thou maintain my lot. Whatsoever thou deny to me, or howsoever thou deal with me, give me thyself, and I shall have enough.

Though strangers and enemies to thee scramble for the good things which thou scatterest here below, and desire no more, yet let me see the felicity of thy chosen, rejoice with the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance. O friend, it is eternal life to know this only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John xvii. 3.

Were I able to set this God forth in the thousandth part of that grace and glory wherewith he is clothed, as with a garment; could I present him to thee in any degree suitable to his vast perfections, and give thee eyes to behold him, it were impossible but that thou should choose him for thy portion: but, alas! all the angels in heaven cannot draw him at length! Surely, then, we who are clogged so much with flesh, know less of this Father of spirits. Simonides being asked by Hiero, What God was? required some time to consider of it, and as much more at the end of that time, and double at the end of that: of which delay Hiero asked a reason. He answered, *Quo magis inquiro, eo minus invenio*, The farther I search, the more I am at a loss. There can be no finding God out, there being no equal proportion between the faculty and the object. If I had been in heaven, and seen him face to face, I should know him to my perfection, but could not know him to his perfections. But suppose I had been there, and seen those infinite beauties and glories, according to the utmost of my capacity, yet my tongue would not be able to tell it thee, nor thine ears to hear it. Oh, what an unspeakable loss am I at, now I am speaking of this infinite God! My thoughts run into a labyrinth; I am as a little cock-boat floating on the ocean, or as an infant offering to reach the sun. My meditations please me exceedingly. Oh, how sweet is this subject! I could dwell in this hive of honey and happiness—Lord, let me!—whilst I have a being. How pleasant are thy thoughts to me, O God, thou true paradise of all pleasure, thou living fountain of felicity, thou original and exact pattern of all perfections! How comely is thy face, how lovely is thy voice! While I behold, though but a little, of thy beauty and glory, my heart is filled with marrow and fatness, and my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips. My soul followeth hard after thee. Oh, when shall I come and appear before thee? When wilt thou come to me?—or when, rather, will that blessed time come that I shall be taken up to thee? Sinners miss thee walking in the mist of ignorance. Ah, did they know thee, they would never crucify the Lord of glory! When they come once into that blackness of darkness, where they shall have light enough to see how good thou

art in thyself, and, in thy Son, to immortal souls, and to see their misery in the loss of an eternal blessed life, how will they tear their hairs, and bite their flesh, and cut their hearts with anguish and sorrow for their cruel folly and damnable desperate madness in refusing so incomparable and inestimable a portion! Saints bless themselves in thee, and rather pity than envy the greatest potentates, who want thee for their portion; having not seen thee, they love thee, and in whom, though now they see not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But, reader, whither do I wander? I confess I am a little out of my way; but I wish, as Augustine, when preaching, forgat his subject he was upon, and fell to confute the Manichees, by which means Firmus, at that time his auditor, was converted, so that my going a few paces astray may be instrumental to bring thee home. What shall I say unto thee, or wherewith shall I persuade thee? Could I by my prayer move God to open thine eyes—as the prophet did for his servant, 2 Kings iv.—to see the worth and worthiness, the love and loveliness of this portion, thou shouldst not an hour longer be alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in thee. But be of good comfort. Read on; he that made the seeing eye is willing to open the eyes of the blind, and thou mayest possibly, before thou art come to the end of the book, meet with that eye-salve of the sanctuary which may do the work.

What I have farther to offer to thee in relation to this choice, shall be to encourage thee to it by four properties of this portion; in the handling of which I shall put the world in one scale, with all its mines of gold, and allow them as many grains as can be allowed them, and put this one God in the other scale, and leave thy own reason to judge which scale is most weighty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

God is a satisfying and a sanctifying portion.

First, God is a satisfying portion. The things of this world may surfeit a man, but they can never satisfy him. Most men have too much, but no man hath enough; as ships, they have that burden which sinks them when they have room to hold more. 'He that loveth silver is not satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth gold with increase,' Eccles. v. 10. Worldlings are like the Parthians, the more they drink, the more they thirst. As the melancholy

chemist, they work eagerly to find the philosopher's stone, rest and happiness in it, though they have experience of its vanity, and it hath already brought them to beggary. The world cannot satisfy the senses, much less the soul: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing.

As the apes in the story, finding a glow-worm in a frosty night, took it for a spark of fire, gathered some sticks, and leaped on it, expecting to be warmed by it, but all in vain: so men think to find warmth and satisfaction in creatures; but they are as the clothes to David, when stricken in years, though covered with them, not able to give any heat. Where shall contentment be found, and where is the place of satisfaction? The depth saith, It is not in me; and the earth saith, It is not in me: nay, heaven itself, were God out of it, would say, It is not in me.

Reader, thou longest for the things of this world, and thinkest, couldst thou have but a table full of such dishes, thou shouldst feed heartily, and fill thyself. But dost thou not know they are like the meat which sick men cry so much for, that, when brought to them, they can taste of possibly, but not at all fill themselves with. The pond of the creature hath so much mud at the bottom, that none can have a full draught. The sun and moon seem bigger at first rising than when they come to be over our heads. All outward things are great in expectation, but nothing in fruition. The world promiseth as much, and performeth as little, as the tomb of Semiramis. When she had built a stately tomb, she caused this inscription to be engraven on it: Whatsoever king shall succeed here, and want money, let him open this tomb, and he shall have enough to serve his turn; which Darius afterwards, wanting money, opened, and, instead of riches, found this sharp reproof: Unless thou hadst been extremely covetous and greedy of filthy lucre, thou wouldst not have opened the grave of the dead to seek for money. Thus many run to the world with high hopes, and return with nothing but blanks. Hence it is that worldlings are said to feed on lies, and to suck wind from this strumpet's breasts, both which are far from filling, Hosea x. 13, and xii. 1.

Reader, since the controversy is so great amongst men, whether rest doth not grow on the furrows of the field, and happiness in the mines of gold; whether creatures wisely distilled may not have happiness drawn out of them, let us hear the judgment of one that enjoyed the world at will, and had prudence enough to extract the quintessence of it; who was thoroughly furnished with all variety

of requisites for such an undertaking, who did set himself curiously to anatomise the body of the creation. And what is the result? 'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity,' saith the preacher. Mark,

1. Vanity in the abstract; not *vain*, but *vanity*.

2. Plurality, Vanity *of vanities;* excessive vanity, all over vanity, nothing but vanity.

3. Universality, *All* is vanity: everything severally, all things collectively. Riches are vanity, Eccles. ii.; honours are vanity; pleasures are vanity; knowledge is vanity; all is vanity.

4. The verity of all this, *saith the preacher;* one that speaks not by guess or hearsay, but by experience, who had tried the utmost that the creature could do, and found it to come far short of satisfying man's desire; one that spake not only his own opinion, but by divine inspiration; yet the total of the account which he gives in, after he had reckoned up all the creatures, is nothing but ciphers; 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' saith the preacher.

Men that are in the valley think, if they were at the top of such a hill, they should touch the heavens. Men that are in the bottom of poverty, or disgrace, or pain, think, if they could get up to such a mountain, such a measure of riches, and honours, and delights, they could reach happiness. Now Solomon had got to the top of this hill, and seeing so many scrambling and labouring so hard, nay, riding on one another's necks, and pressing one another to death to get foremost, doth seem thus to bespeak them: Sirs, ye are all deceived in your expectations; I see the pains ye take to get up to this place, thinking, that when you come hither, ye shall touch the heavens, and reach happiness; but I am before you at the top of the hill—I have treasures, and honours, and pleasures in variety and abundance, Eccles. ii. 12, 13—and I find the hill full of quagmires instead of delights, and so far from giving me satisfaction, that it causeth much vexation; therefore be advised to spare your pains, and spend your strength for that which will turn to more profit; for, believe it, you do but work at the labour in vain. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' saith the preacher.

We have weighed the world in the balance, and found it lighter than vanity; let us see what weight God hath. David will tell us, though the vessel of the creature be frozen, that no satisfaction can be drawn thence, yet this fountain runneth freely to the full content of all true Christians: 'The Lord is the portion of my cup, and inheritance; thou maintainest my lot.' The former expression, as I observed before, is an allusion to the custom of dividing their drink at banquets, the latter to the division of Canaan by lot and

line, Ps. lxxviii. 55; according as the lot fell, was every one's part. Now David's part and lot fell, it seems, like the Levites under the law, on God, but is he pleased in his portion, and can he take any delight in his estate? 'The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, yea, I have a goodly heritage,' Ps. xvi. 5, 6. As if he had said, No lot ever fell in a better land; my portion happeneth in the best place that is possible; my knowledge of thee and propriety in thee affordeth full content and felicity to me. I have enough, and crave no more; I have all, and can have no more. Though creatures bring in an *ignoramus* to that inquiry concerning satisfaction, yet the all-sufficient God doth not.

If it were possible for one man to be crowned with the royal diadem and dominion of the whole world, and to enjoy all the treasures, and honours, and pleasures that all the kingdoms on earth can yield, if his senses and understanding were enlarged to the utmost of created capacities, to taste and take in whatsoever comfort and delight the universe can give; if he had the society of glorious angels and glorified saints thrown into the bargain, and might enjoy all this the whole length of the world's duration, yet without God would this man in the midst of all this be unsatisfied; these things, like dew, might wet the branches, please the flesh, but would leave the root dry, the spirit discontented. Once admit the man to the sight of God, and let God but possess his heart, and then, and not before, his infinite desires expire in the bosom of his Maker. Now the weary dove is at rest, and the vessel tossed up and down on the waters is quiet in its haven. There is in the heart of man such a drought, without this river of paradise, that all the waters in the world, though every drop were an ocean, cannot quench it. Oh what dry chips are all creatures to a hungry immortal soul! Lord, saith Augustine, thou hast made our heart for thee, and it will never rest till it come to thee; and when I shall wholly cleave to thee, then my life will be lively.[1]

There are two special faculties in man's soul, which must be answered with suitable and adequate objects, or the heart, like the sea, cannot rest. The understanding must be satisfied with truth, and the will with good. For the filling of these two faculties men are as busy as bees, flying over the field of the world, and trying every flower for sweetness, but after all their toil and labour, house themselves, like wasps, in curious combs without any honey. The understanding must be suited with the highest truth; but the world is a lie, Ps. lxii., and the things thereof are called lying vanities;

[1] Aug. Confess.

they are not what they seem to be, Jonah ii. 8, and hence are unable to satisfy the mind; but God is *æterna veritas, et vera æternitas*, eternal truth, and true eternity. All truth is originally in him; his nature is the idea of truth, and his will the standard of truth; and it is eternal life and utmost satisfaction to know him, because by it the understanding is perfected; for the soul in God will see all truth, and that not only clearly—I speak of the other world, where the Christian's happiness shall be completed—face to face, but also fully. Aristotle, though a heathen, thought happiness to consist in the knowledge of the chiefest good. If Archimedes, when he found out the resolution of one question in the mathematics was so ravished that he ran up and down crying, I have found it, I have found it; how will the Christian be transported when he shall know all that is knowable, and all shadows of ignorance vanish as the darkness before the rising sun. The will also must be suited with good, and according to the degree of goodness in the object, such is the degree of satisfaction to the faculty. Now the things of this life, though good in themselves, yet are vain and evil by reason of the sin of man, Rom. viii. 20; and likewise are at best but bodily, limited, and fading good things, and therefore incapable of filling this faculty. As truth in the utmost latitude is the object of the understanding, so good in the universality of it is the object of the will. Further, that good which satisfieth must be *optimum*, the best, or it will never *sistere appetitum*, the soul will otherwise be still longing; and *maximum*, the most perfect, or it will never *implere appetitum*, fill it. But God is such a good, he is essentially, universally, unchangeably, and infinitely good, and therefore satisfieth. 'When I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness,' Ps. xvii. 15. When my body hath slept in the bed of the grave till the morning of the resurrection, and the sound of the last trump shall awaken me, oh the sweet satisfaction and ravishing delight which my soul shall enjoy in being full of thy likeness and thy love! Nay, in the meantime, before the happiness of a saint appear to his view in a full body, it doth, like the rising sun, with its forerunning rays, cast such a lightsome, gladsome brightness upon the believer, that he is filled with joy at present, and would not part with his hopes of it for the whole world in hand. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, (while on this side heaven;) and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,' Ps. xxxvi. 8. Though the wedding dinner be deferred till the wedding-day, yet beforehand the Christian meets with many a running banquet. He hath not only plea-

sures, 'fatness of thy house,' but also plenty of it here below: 'They shall be abundantly satisfied.'

The world is like sharp sauce, which doth not fill, but provoke the stomach to call for more. The voice of those guests whom it makes most welcome, is like the daughters of the horseleech, Give, give; but the infinite God, like solid food, doth satisfy the soul fully, ('in my Father's house is bread enough,') and causeth it to cry out, I have enough.

Secondly, God is a sanctifying, ennobling portion. The world cannot advance the soul in the least. Things of the world are fitly compared to shadows, for be thy shadow never so long, thy body is not the longer for it; so be thy estate never so great, thy soul is not the better for it. A great letter makes no more to the signification of a word than the smallest. Men in high places are the same men, no real worth being thereby added to them, that they are in low ones.

Nay, it is too too visible that men are the worse for their earthly portions. If some had not been so wealthy, they had not been so wicked. Most of the world's favourites, like aguish stomachs, are fuller of appetite than digestion; they eat more than they can concoct, and thereby cause diseases; nay, by feeding on this trash of earth, their stomachs are taken off from substantial food, the bread of heaven. The soldiers of Hannibal were effeminated, and made unfit for service, by their pleasures at Capua. Damps arising out of the earth have stifled many a soul. Aristotle tells us of a sea wherein, by the hollowness of the earth under it, or some whirling property, ships used to be cast away in the midst of a calm.[1] Many perish in their greatest prosperity; and are so busy about babies and rattles, that they have no leisure to be saved, Luke xiv. 18.

That which doth elevate and ennoble the soul of man must be more excellent than the soul. Silver is embased by mixing it with lead, but ennobled by gold, because the former is inferior to it, but the latter excels it. The world and all things in it are infinitely inferior to the soul of man; and therefore it is debased by mingling with them; but God is infinitely superior, and so advanceth it by joining with it. That coin which is the most excellent metal defileth our hands, and is apt to defile our hearts; but the divine nature elevateth and purifieth the spirit.

The goodliest portions of this life are like the cities which Solomon gave to Hiram. 'And Hiram came from Tyre to see the

[1] Arist. Probl., sect. 23.

cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul (that is, displeasing or dirty) unto this day,' 1 Kings ix. 12, 13. The pleasantest portion here lieth in the land of Cabul; it is displeasing and dirty; it doth both dissatisfy and defile, when the heavenly portion doth, like honey, both delight and cleanse, both please and purify.

Outward things, like common stones to a ring, add nothing at all to the worth of a soul; but this sparkling diamond, this pearl of price, the infinite God, makes the gold ring of the soul to be of unspeakable value. 'The heart of the wicked is little worth,' Prov. x. 20. His house is worth somewhat, but his heart is worth nothing, because it is a ditch full only of dirt; his earthly portion hath possession of it; but the heart of a godly man is worth millions, because it is the cabinet where this inestimable jewel is laid up. 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. xii. 26, because he partaketh of the divine nature. God, like gold, enricheth whatsoever he is joined to; hence it is that things which excel in Scripture are usually said to be things of God; as the garden of God, Ezek. xxviii. 13; the hill of God, Ps. lxviii. 15; the mountains of God, Ps. xxxvi. 6; a city of God, John iii. 3; the cedars of God, Ps. lxxx. 10;—that is, the most excellent garden, hill, mountain, city, and cedars. God is the perfection of thy soul; and therefore would, if thy portion, advance it to purpose. Oh what a height of honour and happiness wouldst thou arrive at if this God were thine! Now like a worm thou crawlest on, and dwellest in the earth, the meanest and basest of all the elements, that which brutes trample under their feet; but then like an eagle thou wouldst mount up to heaven, contemning these toys, and leaving those babies for children, and, as an angel, always stand in the presence of, and enjoy unspeakable pleasure in him who is thy portion. Thy life at present is low, little differing from the life of a beast, consisting chiefly in making provision for—that which should be thy slave—the flesh; but thy life then would be high and noble, much resembling the lives of those honourable courtiers, whose continual practice is to adore and admire the blessed and only potentate.

Dost thou not find by experience that earthly things obstruct holiness, and thereby hinder thy soul's happiness? Alas! the best of them are but like the wings of a butterfly, which, though curiously painted, foul the fingers; but if thine heart had but

once closed with God as thy portion, it would be every day more pure, and nearer to perfection. Thou hast, it may be, gold and silver; why, the Midianites' camels had chains of gold, and were they ever the better? Judges viii. 26. Many brutes have had silver bells, but their natures brutish still; but oh the excellency which God would add to thy soul by bestowing on it his own likeness and love!

CHAPTER XIX.

God a universal and eternal portion.

Thirdly, God is a universal portion.[1] God hath in himself eminently and infinitely all good things; and creatures are bounded in their beings, and therefore in the comfort which they yield. Health answereth sickness, but it doth not answer poverty. Honour is a help against disgrace, but not against pain. Money is the most universal medicine, and therefore is said to answer all things; but as great a monarch as it is, it can neither command ease in sickness, nor honours in disgrace, much less quiet a wounded spirit. At best, creatures are but particular beings, and so but particular blessings. Now man, being a compound of many wants and weaknesses, can never be happy till he find a salve for every sore, and a remedy which bears proportion as well to the number as nature of his maladies. Ahab, though in his ivory palace, upon his throne of glory, attended with his noble lords, and swaying a large sceptre, was miserable because the heavens were brass. Haman, though he had the favour of the prince, the adoration of the people, the sway of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, yet is discontented because he wanted Mordecai's knee. If the world's darlings enjoy many good things, yet they, as Christ told the young man, always lack one thing, which makes them at a loss.

But God is all good things, and every good thing. He is self-sufficient, alone-sufficient, and all-sufficient. Nothing is wanting in him, either for the soul's protection from all evil, or perfection with all good. Reader, if God were thy portion, thou shouldst find in him whatsoever thine heart could desire, and whatsoever could tend to thy happiness. Art thou ambitious? He is a crown of glory, and a royal diadem. Art thou covetous? He is unsearchable riches, yea, durable riches and righteousness. Art thou voluptuous? He is rivers of pleasures and fulness of joy. Art thou

[1] Operari sequitur esse.

hungry? He is a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow. Art thou weary? He is rest, a shadow from the heat, and a shelter from the storm. Art thou weak? In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Art thou in doubts? He is marvellous in counsel. Art thou in darkness? He is the Sun of righteousness, an eternal light. Art thou sick? He is the God of thy health. Art thou sorrowful? He is the God of all consolations. Art thou dying? He is the fountain and Lord of life. Art thou in any distress? His name is a strong tower; thither thou mayest run and find safety. He is *πᾶν φάρμακον*, a universal medicine against all sorts of miseries. Whatsoever thy calamity is, he could remove it; whatsoever thy necessity, he could relieve it. He is silver, gold, honour, delight, food, raiment, house, land, peace, wisdom, power, beauty, father, mother, wife, husband, mercy, love, grace, glory, and infinitely more than all these. God and all his creatures are no more than God without any of his creatures. As the Jews say of manna, that it had all sorts of delicate tastes in it; it is most true of God, he hath all sorts of delights in him.[1] This tree of life beareth twelve manner of fruits every month, Rev. xxii. 2. There is in it both variety and plenty of comforts. The former prevents our loathing, the latter our lacking.

One being desirous to see the famous city of Athens, was told, *Viso Solone vidisti omnia*, See but Solon; and in him you may see all the rarities and excellencies in it. Reader, wouldst thou see all the wealth and worth of sea and land? Wouldst thou be upon the pinnacle of the temple, as Christ was, and behold, and have the offer of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? Nay, wouldst thou view heaven's glorious city, the royal palace of the great King, the costly curious workmanship about it, and the unheard-of rarities and delights in that court, which infinite embroidered wisdom contrived, boundless power and love erected, and infinite bounty enriched? Thou mayest both see and enjoy all this in God. See but God, and thou seest all; enjoy but God, and thou enjoyest all in him.

As a merchant in London may trade for and fetch in the horses of Barbary, the Canary sacks, the French wines, the Spanish sweetmeats, the oils of Candia, the spices of Egypt, the artificial wares of Alexandria, the silks of Persia, the embroideries of Turkey, the golden wedges of India, the emeralds of Scythia, the topazes of Ethiopia, and the diamonds of Bisnager, so mightst thou, were but

[1] Quid quæris extra illum? quid desideras præter illum? quid placet cum illo?—*Bern. Serm. de Misce. Com.*

this God thy portion, fetch in the finest bread to feed thee, the choicest wine to comfort thee, oil to cheer thee, joy to refresh thee, raiment to clothe thee, the jewels of grace to beautify thee, and the crown of glory to make thee blessed, nay, all the wealth of this and the other world. If all the riches in the covenant of grace, if all the good things which Christ purchased with his precious blood, nay, if as much good as is in an infinite God can make thee happy, thou shouldst have it. If David were thought worth ten thousand Israelites, how much is the God of Israel worth?

This one God would fill up thy soul in its utmost capacity. It is such an end that when thou attainest thou couldst go no farther, shouldst desire no more, but quietly rest for ever. The necessity of the creatures' number speaks the meanness of their value; but the universality of good in this one God proclaims his infinite worth. As there are all parts of speech in that one verse,

'Væ tibi ridenti, quia mox post gaudia flebis;'

so there are all perfections in this one God. What a portion is this friend!

Fourthly, God is an eternal portion. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, a little inch of time, a τὸ νὺν, a season is a very short space, Heb. xi., but the portion of a saint is for ever. 'God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' The greatest estate here below is a flood soon up and soon down; but if God say once to thy soul, as to Aaron's, 'I am thine inheritance,' Num. xviii. 20, neither men nor devils can cozen thee of it. 'The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever,' Ps. xxxvii. 18.

The prodigal wasted his portion, and so came to poverty. The glutton swalloweth down his portion, burying it in his belly. The drunkard vomiteth up his portion. The ambitious person often turneth his portion into smoke, and it vanisheth in the air. Those whose portion continueth longest will be turned out of possession, when death once comes with a writ from heaven to seal a lease of ejectment; for all these portions are dying gourds, deceitful brooks, and flying shadows. But ah, how contrary hereunto is the portion of a believer! God is an eternal portion. If he were once thy portion, he would be for ever thy portion. When thy estate, and children, and wife, and honours, and all earthly things should be taken from thee, he is the good part which shall never be taken from thee, Luke x. 42. Thy friends may use thee as a suit of apparel, which, when they have worn threadbare, they throw off, and call for new. Thy relations may serve thee as women their flowers,

who stick them in their bosoms when fresh and flourishing; but, when dying and withered, they throw them to the dunghill. Thy riches, and honours, and pleasures, and wife, and children, may stand on the shore and see thee launching into the ocean of eternity, but will not step one foot into the water after thee; thou mayest sink or swim for them. Only this God is thy portion, will never leave thee nor forsake thee, Heb. xiii. 5. Oh how happy wouldst thou be in having such a friend! Thy portion would be tied to thee in this life, as Dionysius thought his kingdom was to him, with chains of adamant; there would be no severing it from thee. The world could not; thou shouldst live above the world whilst thou walkest about it, and behave thyself in it, not as its champion, but conqueror. 'He that is born of God, overcometh the world,' 1 John v. 4. Satan should not part thee and thy portion. Thy God hath him in his chain; and though, like a mastiff without teeth, he may bark, yet he can never bite or hurt his children. 'I have written unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one,' 1 John ii. 13. Nay, it should not be in thine own power to sell away thy portion. Thou wouldst be a joint-heir with Christ, and co-heirs cannot sell, except both join; and Christ knoweth the worth of this inheritance too well to part with it for all that this beggarly world can give, Rom. viii. 17. The apostle makes a challenge, which men nor devils could never accept or take up: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,' Rom. viii. 35, 37. Nay, at death thy portion would swim out with thee in that shipwreck; death, which parts all other portions from men, will give thee full possession of thine. Then, and not till then, thou shouldst know what it is worth; yea, even at the great day, the fire which shall burn up the world shall not so much as singe thy portion. Thou mightst stand upon its ruins and sing, I have lost nothing; I have my portion, my inheritance, my happiness, my God still.

Other portions, like summer fruit, are soon ripe and soon rotten; but this portion, like winter fruit, though it be longer before the whole be gathered, yet it will continue. Gold and silver, in which other men's portion lieth, are corruptible; but thy portion, like the body of Christ, shall never see corruption.

When all earthly portions, as meat overdriven, certainly corrupts, or as water in cisterns quickly groweth unsavoury, this portion, like the water in Æsculapius's well, is not capable of putrefaction.

O friend, what are all the portions in the world, which, as a candle, consume in the use, and then go out in a stink, to this eternal portion? It is reported of one Theodorus, that when there was music and feasting in his father's house, withdrew himself from all the company, and thus thought with himself: Here is content enough for the flesh; but how long will this last? This will not hold out long. Then falling on his knees, O Lord, my heart is open unto thee. I indeed know not what to ask, but only this, Lord, let me not die eternally. O Lord, thou knowest I love thee; oh let me live eternally to praise thee. I must tell thee, reader, to be eternally happy or eternally miserable, to live eternally or to die eternally, are of greater weight than thou art aware of, yea, of far more concernment than thou canst conceive. Ponder this motive therefore thoroughly. God is not only a satisfying portion, filling every crevice of thy soul with the light of joy and comfort; and a sanctifying portion, elevating thy soul to its primitive and original perfection; and a universal portion; not health, or wealth, or friends, or honours, or liberty, or life, or house, or wife, or child, or pardon, or peace, or grace, or glory, or earth, or heaven, but all these and infinitely more; but also he is an eternal portion. This God would be thy God for ever and ever, Ps. xlviii. 14. Oh sweet word *ever!* thou art the crown of the saints' crown, and the glory of their glory. Their portion is so full that they desire no more; they enjoy variety and plenty of delights above what they are able to ask or think, and want nothing but to have it fixed. May they but possess it in peace without interruption or cessation, they will trample all the kingdoms of the earth as dirt under their feet; and, lo! thou art the welcome dove to bring this olive branch in thy mouth, This God is our God for ever and ever. All the arithmetical figures of days, and months, and years, and ages, are nothing to this infinite cipher *ever*, which, though it stand for nothing in the vulgar account, yet contains all our millions; yea, our millions and millions of millions are less than drops to this ocean *ever*.

If all the pleasures of the whole creation cannot countervail the fruition of God, though but for one moment, how happy shouldst thou be to enjoy him for ever! If the first fruits and foretastes of the Christian's felicity be so ravishing, what will the harvest be? Friend, little dost thou think what crowns, sceptres, palms, thrones, kingdoms, glories, beauties, banquets, angelical entertainments, beatifical visions, societies, varieties, and eternities are prepared for them who choose God for their portion. If the saint's cross in the judgment of Moses—when at age, and able to

make a true estimate of things—were more worth than all the treasures of Egypt, and he chose it rather, what is the saint's crown, eternal crown, worth?

To conclude this use, reader, take a serious view of this portion which is here tendered to thee, and consider upon what easy terms it may be thine for ever. The portion is no less than the infinite God. 'Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity,' Isa. xl. 15, 17. Other portions are bodily; he is spiritual, and so suitable to thy soul. Other portions are mixed, like the Israelites' pillar, which had a dark as well as a light side; but he is pure; there is not the least spot in this sun; he is a sea of sweetness without the smallest drop of gall. Other portions are particular; there are some chinks in the outward man which they cannot fill, besides the many leaks of the soul, none of which they can stop; but he is a universal portion. All the excellencies of the creatures, even when their dregs and imperfections are removed, are but dark shadows of those many substantial excellencies which are in him. He made all, he hath all, he is all. The most fluent tongue will quickly be at a loss in extolling him, for he is above all blessing and praises. Other portions are debasing, like dross to gold, an allay to its worth; but he is an advancing portion, as a set of diamonds to a royal crown, infinitely adding to its value. Other portions are perishing; they may be lost; they will be left when death calls; thy cloth will be then drawn, and not one dish remain on the table. But he is an everlasting portion. The souls that feast with him, like Mephibosheth at David's, eat bread at his table continually. 'In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.' Now, is not here infinite reason why thou shouldst choose this God for thy portion?

Consider the terms upon which he is willing to be thy portion. He desires no more than thou wouldst take him for thy treasure and happiness. Surely such a portion is worthy of all acceptance. Be thy own judge; may not God expect, and doth he not deserve, as much respect as thine earthly portion hath had? Can thy esteem of him be too high, or thy love to him be too hot, or thy labour for him too great? Oh what warm embraces hast thou given the world! Throw that strumpet now out of thine arms, and take the fairest of ten thousand in her room. What high thoughts hast thou had of the world? What wouldst thou not formerly do or suffer to gain a little more of it? Now, pull down

that usurper out of the throne, and set the King of saints there, whose place it is. Esteem him superlatively above all things, and make it thy business, whatsoever he call thee to do or suffer, to gain his love, which is infinitely better than life itself. Do but exalt him in thy heart as thy chiefest good, and in thy life as thine utmost end, and he will make a deed of gift of himself to thee. Is it not rational what he desires? Why shouldst thou then refuse? Here is God, there is the world; here is bread, there is husks; here is the substance, there is a shadow; here is paradise, there is an apple; here is fulness, there is emptiness; here is a fountain, there is a broken cistern; here is all things, there is nothing; here is heaven, there is hell; here is eternity, I say, eternity of joy and pleasure, there is eternity. O that word eternity, of sorrow and pain! Choose now which of the two thou wilt take, and advise with thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me, 1 Chron. xxi. 12.

CHAPTER XX.

Comfort to such as have God for their portion.

Fourthly, The doctrine may be useful by way of consolation. It speaketh much comfort to every true Christian—God is thy portion. Thy portion is not in toys and trifles, in narrow limited creatures, but in the blessed boundless God. He cannot be poor who hath my lord mayor to his friend, much less he that hath God to his portion—a portion so precious and perfect, that none of the greatest arithmeticians ever undertook to compute its worth, as knowing it impossible—a portion so permanent, that neither death, nor life, nor the world, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, can part thee from it. This cordial may enliven thee in a dying estate. None can part thee and thy portion. The winter may freeze the ponds, but not the ocean. All other portions may be frozen and useless in hard weather, but this portion is ever full and filling. Hagar, when her bottle of water was spent, wept, because she did not see the fountain that was so near her. The absence of the creatures need not make thee mourn, who hast the presence of the Creator.

Thou mayest have comfort from thy portion in the most afflicted condition. Do men plunder thee of thy estate? Thou art rich towards God, and mayest suffer the spoiling of thy goods joyfully,

knowing that thou hast a more enduring substance, Heb. x. 34. Do they cast thee into prison? Though thy body be in fetters, thy soul enjoyeth freedom. No chains can so fasten thee to the earth, but thou mayest mount up to heaven upon the wings of meditation and prayer. Do they take away thy food? Thou hast meat to eat which they know not of, and wine to drink which makes glad the heart of man, Ps. civ. 15. Is thy body sick? Thy soul is sound, and so long all is well. The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick. The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities. Is thy life in danger? If thine enemies kill thee, they cannot hurt thee; they will do thee the greatest courtesy. They will do that kindness for thee, for which thou hast many a time prayed, sighed, wept; even free thee from thy corruptions, and send thee to the beatifical vision. When they call thee out to die, they do but, as Christ to Peter, call thee up to the mount, where thou shalt see thy Saviour transfigured, and say, Let us build tabernacles. Oh, it is good to be here. Though Saul was frantic without a fiddler, and Belshazzar could not be cheerful without his cups, yet the philosopher could be merry, saith Plato, without music, and much more the Christian under the greatest outward misery. What weight can sink him who hath the everlasting arms to support him? What want can sadden him who hath infinite bounty and mercy to supply him? Nothing can make him miserable who hath God for his happiness. 'Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.' O Christian, thou mayest walk so that the world may know thou art above their affrightments, and that all their allurements are below thy hopes.

In particular, the doctrine is comfortable against the death of our Christian friends, and against our own deaths.

First, It is a comfort against the death of our friends. God is a godly man's portion, therefore they are blessed who die in the Lord without us; and we are happy who live in the Lord without them.

It is a comfort that they are happy without creatures. What wise man will grieve at his friend's gain? In the ceremonial law there was a year of jubilee, in which every man who had lost or sold his land, upon the blowing of a trumpet had possession again. The death's-day of thy believing relation is his day of jubilee, in which he is restored to the possession of his eternal and inestimable portion. Who ever pined that married an heir in his minority, at his coming to age, and going to receive his portion? Their death is not penal, but medicinal; not destructive, but perfective

to their souls. It doth that for them which none of the ordinances of God, nor providences of God, nor graces of the Spirit ever yet did for them. It sends the weary to their sweet and eternal rest. This serpent is turned into a rod, with which God works wonders for their good. The Thracians wept at the births of men, and feasted at their funerals. If they counted mortality a mercy, who could see death only to be the end of outward sufferings, shall not we who besides that see it to be the beginning of matchless and endless solace? A wife may well wring her hands, and pierce her heart with sorrow, when her husband is taken away from her, and dragged to execution, to hell; but surely she may rejoice when he is called from her by his prince, to live at court in the greatest honours and pleasures, especially when she is promised within a few days to be sent for to him, and to share with him in those joys and delights for ever.

Some observe that the Egyptians mourned longer (for they mourned seventy days) for old Jacob's death than Joseph his own son; and the reason is this, because they had hopes only in this life, when Joseph knew that, as his father's body was carried to the earthly, so his soul was translated to the heavenly Canaan. 'I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others that have no hope,' 1 Thes. iv. 13.

As they are happy without us, for God is their portion; so we are happy without them. We have our God still; that stormy wind which blew out our candles, did not extinguish our sun. Our friend, when on his or her deathbed, might bespeak us, as Jacob his sons: 'I die, but God shall visit you; I go from you, but God shall abide with you. I leave you, but God will find you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.' Reader, if God live, though thy friends die, I hope thou art not lost, thou art not undone. May not God say to thee, when thou art pining and whining for the death of thy relations or friends, as if thou wert eternally miserable, as Elkanah to Hannah: 'Am not I better to thee than ten sons?' Am not I better to thee than ten husbands, than ten wives, than ten thousand worlds? Oh think of it, and take comfort in it!

Secondly, It is comfortable against thy own death. God is thy portion, and at death thou shalt take possession of thy vast estate. Now thou hast a freehold in law, a right to it; but then thou shalt have a freehold in deed, make thy entry on it, and be really seized of it. It is much that heathens who were purblind and could not see afar off into the joys and pleasures of the other world, the hopes

of which alone can make death truly desirable, should with less fear meet this foe than many Christians. Nay, it was more difficult to persuade several of those pagans to live out all their days, than it is to persuade some amongst us to be willing to die when God calls them. Codrus could throw himself into a pit, that his country might live by his death. Cato could, against the entreaty of all his friends, with his own hands, open the door at which his life went out.[1] Platinus, the philosopher, held mortality a mercy, that we might not always be liable to the miseries of this life. When the Persian king wept that all his army should die in the revolution of an age, Artabanus told him that they should all meet with so many and such great evils, that they should wish themselves dead long before. Lysimachus threatened to kill Theodorus, but he stoutly answered the king, that was no great matter; the cantharides, a little fly, could do as much. Cleombrotus having read Plato of the soul's immortality, did presently send his own soul out of his body to try and taste it. The bare opinion of the Druids, that the soul had a continuance after death, made them hardy in all dangers, saith Cæsar, and fearless of death.[2]

Christians surely have more cause to be valiant in their last conflict; and it is no credit to their Father that they are so loath to go home. The Turks tell us that surely Christians do not believe heaven to be so glorious a place as they talk of; for if they did, they would not be so unwilling to go thither. It may make the world think the child hath but cold welcome at his father's house, that he lingers so much abroad; certainly such bring an ill report upon the good land.

Christian, what is it in death that thou art afraid of? Is it not a departure, the jail delivery of a long prisoner, the sleep of thy body, and a wakening of thy soul, the way to bliss, the gate of life, the portal to paradise? Art thou not sure to triumph before thou fightest, by dying to overcome death, and when thou leavest thy body, to be joined to thy head? The Roman general, in the encounter between Scipio and Hannibal, thought he could not use a more effectual persuasion to encourage his soldiers, than to tell them that they were to fight with those whom they had formerly overcome, and who were as much their slaves as their enemies. Thou art to enter the list against that adversary whom thou hast long ago conquered in Jesus Christ, and who is more thy slave than thine enemy. Death is thine, 1 Cor. iii. 22, thy servant and slave

[1] Plut. in Vit. Utic. Cat.

[2] Cæs., lib. vi. De Bell. Gal.

to help off thy clothes, and to put thee to thine everlasting happy rest.

Is it the taking down of thine earthly tabernacle which troubles thee? Why, dost thou not know that death is the workman sent by the Father to pull down this earthly house of mortality and clay, that it may be set up anew, infinitely more lasting, beautiful, and glorious? Didst thou believe how rich and splendid he intends to make it, which cannot be unless taken down, thou wouldst contentedly endure the present toil and trouble, and be thankful to him for his care and cost. He takes down thy vile body, that he may fashion it like to the glorious body of his own Son, which for brightness and beauty excels the sun in its best attire, far more than that doth the meanest star.

Is it the untying of the knot betwixt body and soul which perplexeth thee? It is true they part; but, as friends going two several ways, shake hands till they return from their journey; they are as sure of meeting again as of parting; for thy soul shall return laden with the wealth of heaven, and fetch his old companion to the participation of all his joy and happiness.

Is it the rotting of thy body in the grave that grieves thee? Indeed, Plato's worldling doth sadly bewail it: Woe is me, that I shall lie alone rotting in the earth amongst the crawling worms, not seeing aught above, nor seen. But thou who hast read it is a sweet bed of spices for thy body to rest in, all the dark night of this world's duration, mayest well banish such fears. Hast thou never heard God speaking to thee, as once to Jacob, 'Fear not to go down into (Egypt, into) the grave, I will go down with thee, and I will bring thee up again,' Gen. xlvi. 4.

Besides, thy soul shall never die. The heathen historian could comfort himself against death with this weak cordial, *Non omnis moriar*, All of me doth not die; though my body be mortal, my books are immortal. But thou hast a stronger julep, a more rich cordial to clear thy spirits; when thy body fails, thy soul will flourish. Thy death is a burnt-offering; when thy ashes fall to the earth, the celestial flame of thy soul will mount up to heaven. Farther, death will ease thee of those most troublesome guests, which make thy life now so burdensome; as the fire to the three children did not so much as singe or sear their bodies, but it burnt and consumed their bands, so death would not the least hurt thy body or soul, but it would destroy those fetters of sin and sorrow, in which thou art entangled. Besides, the sight of the blessed God, which is the only beatifical vision, which at death thy soul shall

enjoy.[1] Popish pilgrims take tedious journeys, and are put to much hardship and expense to behold a dumb idol. The queen of Sheba came from far to see Solomon, and hear his wisdom; and wilt thou not take a step from earth to heaven—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, thy journey will be gone, and thy work be done—to see Jesus Christ, a greater than Solomon? Hast thou not many a time prayed long, and cried for it? Hast thou not trembled lest thou shouldst miss it? Hath not thine heart once and again leaped with joy in hope of it? And when the hour is come, and thou art sent for, dost thou shrink back? For shame, Christian; walk worthy of thy calling, and quicken thy courage in thy last conflict. As the Jews, when it thunders and lightens, open their windows, expecting the Messias should come. Oh when the storm of death beats upon thy body, with what joy mayest thou set those casements of thy soul, faith and hope, wide open, knowing that thy dearest Redeemer, who went before to prepare a place for thee, will then come and fetch thee to himself; that where he is, there thou mayest be also, and that for ever.

[1] Nazian. Orat.

THE PASTOR'S FAREWELL.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To his honoured and courteous Friend, Mrs Mary Beresford, Wife of the Worshipful John Beresford, Esq.

There are two things which I have always judged chiefly requisite in a pastor, as he standeth related to his people—viz., labour and love. The former is a work of the head, the latter of the heart: faithful labour will speak his love, and sincere love will sweeten his labour. Labour without love is unacceptable to God; as a sweet perfume without fire, it cannot send forth its pleasant, fragrant savour. Love without labour is unprofitable to men; like Rachel, it is beautiful, but barren; both together—as soul and body are the essential parts of a man—are the whole of a minister. Whether to my power I discharged my trust or no in these particulars, whilst the divine providence continued me in your parish, I must leave to his judgment, whose eyes behold, and whose eyelids try the children of men; nay, whether I did not many times so labour as to prejudice my own body, that I might serve and profit others' souls; but sure I am, when I left you I could not better manifest my love to you than by commending you to him who will never leave nor forsake his people.

It is the saying of Euripides, That a faithful friend in adversity is better than a calm sea to a weather-beaten mariner. Indeed, the world is full of false lovers, who use their friends as we do candles, burn them to the snuff, and when all their substance is wasted, trample them under their feet, and light others; but God to his chosen is as the ivy clasping about a wall, which will as soon die as desert it. Extremity doth but fasten a trusty friend; whilst he, as a well-wrought vault, is the stronger by how much more weight he beareth. Though many men are as ponds, dry in the heat of summer, when there is most need of them, yet the blessed God dealeth not so with his saints; but his help is nearest when their hardships are greatest. When they walk in the valley of the shadow of death, he is with them.

How great a happiness it is to be under the favour and influence of this God can never be fully known on this side heaven. The Prince of Orange had a mirror, say some, which perfectly repre-

sented the beauty of the natural sun. But this Sun of righteousness is ever in a great degree eclipsed to us who dwell in this lower world. Here we know but in part. Pompey, who presumed to enter the holiest of all, when he came out was asked what he saw. He answered, That the house was full of a cloud. Indeed, he maketh darkness his secret place, and yet is pleased to let so much of his glory and goodness be seen in the glass of his word, as may cause us to admire and affect him, and also assure us that he is the chiefest good.

Somewhat of that felicity which floweth from his favour you will find in some measure discovered in the ensuing discourse, which I present to you as a small acknowledgment of my great engagements to you. Lycurgus, the Lacedæmonian lawgiver, made no law against ingratitude, as thinking it impossible for any man to degenerate so much as to be unthankful. I esteem it my duty to retain the former favours in memory which I and mine have received from yourself and my honoured friend, your husband; and I know not better how to testify my gratitude, than by endeavouring to my power your everlasting welfare, and that you may come to your graves in a full age, as a shock of corn in its season.

It is a mercy to be full of days, a far greater mercy to be full of grace; but to be full of days and full of grace is one of the most blessed, beautiful sights in this world. I hope you are passed from death to life, because you love the brethren; but your age calleth upon you to ensure your effectual calling. The truth is, death borders upon our births, and our coffins hang over our cradles; but though, according to the saying of Epaminondas, we may salute young persons with good-morrow, or welcome, into the world; yet we must salute old persons with good-night, for they are leaving the world. The nearer it is to night, the harder we should work, when we know, if our work be not done in this day of life, we are undone for ever. Natural motions are swiftest at last. The stream of grace must run with greatest speed when it is emptying itself into the ocean of glory. The good Lord enable you to be more and more upright and abundant in well-doing, and so bless your whole family with his fear and favour, that when death shall break it up ye may be preferred from his lower house of prayer to his upper house of praise, where is fulness of joy, and where are pleasures for evermore; which is the desire of

Your servant in the blessed Saviour,

George Swinnock.

THE PASTOR'S FAREWELL.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified.—Acts xx. 32.

Human histories have been valued at such a high price, that they have been dedicated to the most honourable persons, as worthy of their serious perusal. Pliny's Natural History to Vespasian; our English History to King James; the small treatise which Paulus Jovius wrote, De Rebus Turcicis, unto the great and mighty emperor Charles the Fifth; scarce any national piece but it is presented into the hands of the prince. Surely divine histories then, such as this treatise, the Acts of the Apostles, which contain the heroic acts of the Lord's worthies in their combats with, and conquests over, not only men and the world, but sin and Satan, deserve the eye, and ear, and hearts of a noble Theophilus, of great and small, of all men whatsoever.

The former part of the New Testament contains the great mystery of Christ, the head of his church. This book of the Acts contains the glorious history of the church, the body of Christ.

In the beginning of the book some particulars are mentioned of all the apostles, to chapter xiii.; but it treats most largely of Paul's trials and travels, in regard that, as his conversion was most miraculous, so his conversation was most illustrious.

In this 20th chapter we have this famous apostle in his fourth peregrination arriving at Miletus, a city upon the borders of Ionia and Cæsarea, close by the shore of the Ægean Sea, and sending thence for, and speaking to, the Ephesian elders.

In his speech we may observe these four parts.

First, His vindication of himself. Ministers are bound not only

to look to their consciences, but also to their credits. Naturalists tell us, if the loadstone be rubbed with garlic it loseth its virtue. When the name of a minister is contemptible, his doctrine will be the less acceptable. The apostle vindicateth himself—1. As to the integrity of his life: 'Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility, and with many tears,' vers. 18, 19. It is excellent when the pastor can appeal to the consciences of his people for the purity of his conversation. Holy ministers are called angels, Rev. ii., but unholy ones are degenerated into devils: 'Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.' 2. As to his fidelity in his doctrine: 'And how I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,' ver. 20. The steward is faithful who distributeth to every person under his charge their proper and peculiar portion. The symbol of Wolfius will become every preacher: *Pietate et labore.*[1] By a sacred life, and sedulous labour, he will best declare his love to his people. Ministers must be stars by the influence of their lips feeding, by the regular motion of their lives confirming, and by the light of both directing many. Paul magnified his office, why should others debase it?

Secondly, His exhortation to them. As he taught them before by his pattern, so now by his precepts: 'Take heed to the flocks over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,' ver. 28. Take heed,[2] that is, let all your care and study be for your own and people's welfare and prosperity; like good shepherds, work and watch night and day for the good of your sheep. This counsel the apostle urgeth upon a threefold ground.

1. From the person who committed to them this charge: 'Take heed to the flocks over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.' It concerns you to be true to your trust, when it is committed to you by the Spirit of God. That unfaithfulness which is but felony against the charge of a subject, may be treason when it is against the charge of a sovereign. Oh it is ill trifling with the most high God's trust!

2. From the price paid for them: 'To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood,' ver. 28. Things of the greatest cost call for our greatest care; souls are infinitely precious, and therefore deserve our utmost pains. If God thought them worth his blood, we may well esteem them worth our tears and sweat.

[1] Melch. Ad.

[2] Προσεχετε, Toti sitis addicti, totis animis adhæreatis.

3. From the peril their flock was in: vers. 29–31, 'For I know that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them. Therefore watch,' &c. If wolves will watch to devour, shepherds must watch to defend the sheep. Those commanders who are entrusted with a garrison, when they are sure to have their quarters beaten up, had need to be ever upon their guard.

Thirdly, His prediction of his future sufferings, 1. Propounded. 'And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there: saving that the Holy Ghost witnesseth that in every city bonds and afflictions abide me,' vers. 22, 23. Christians of all men must bear their crosses; ministers of all Christians must look to undergo misery; and the more good a minister hath, the more evil he must expect. The fuller the tree is laden, the more cudgels will be thrown at it; the most fruitful meadows hear oftenest in the year of the scythe. Pious and laborious Paul was the chief butt against which men and devils shot. 2. Amplified, from the liberty it thereby denied them of ever seeing Paul again: 'And now, behold, I know that ye all amongst whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more,' ver. 25. Sad news to honest hearts upon a double ground; partly their lack of him. He had told them of wolves entering in among them; now at such a time for the flock to be without a guide; when the storm arose for the vessel to be without a pilot; when the soldiers were to engage in hot service with enemies, for their expert commander to be wanting; must needs be woeful. That the nurse should be taken away before the children could go alone, did much affect and afflict their spirits. Partly their love to him. As Paul was a religious person, and as he was, probably, their spiritual parent who had begotten them, brought them up in the nurture of the Lord, and upon all occasions advised and assisted them, they could not but love him in a high degree, and therefore much lament his loss.

Fourthly, His valediction to those Ephesian elders in the words of the text: 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified,' ver. 32. Before he had given them a command from God, and now he commends them to God. The words contain the legacy which Paul bequeathes to his Christian friends. He taketh his farewell of them, and wisheth a welfare to them.

And now, *καὶ νυν*, since I see that I, who am your guide, must shortly be gone, and since I foresee that wolves will arise, so ravenous as to conspire and endeavour your ruin, what remains, but that I should commend you to God, who can prevent the effects of their cruelty, and supply the want of my company. 'And now the reason is observable. It is the last and the greatest kindness I can do to commend you to God. The occasion is considerable. And now the dying father commits his children to a faithful guardian: And now I must leave you, never to see your faces more; but now I shall leave you to one who will never leave you nor forsake you. 'And now,'

Brethren, *ἀδελφοὶ*. This title is an affectionate term, and speaks how dear and near they were to the apostle. It discovereth much of his humility; though they were his inferiors, yet he calleth them his equals. Brethren stand on the same level. But more of his love. This even relation is accompanied with great affection: 'Love as brethren,' 1 Pet. iii. 8. Love, like water, doth not easily ascend, but will run swiftly and pleasantly on even ground. And now, my dearly beloved, whom I both love and esteem as brethren, who are both near and dear to me, since providence is parting us, I cannot better evidence my affection to you, or care of you, than by committing you to him, from whom none can part you. 'And now, brethren,'

I commend you to God.[1] To commend one to another, in our English phrase, is either to praise him for some worth in him, or to present some respects from him; but in Scripture sense, besides the former acceptations, it sometimes signifieth to refer one to the care of another: Rom. xvi. 1, 'I commend to you Phebe our sister.' To commend in this place signifieth to commit them as dear pledges, or as precious jewels, to the tender custody and keeping of the blessed God. As if he had said, Be not discouraged nor disconsolate at my departure, as if thereby ye should be left desolate, for I commit and commend you to one who will abundantly make up my absence by his almighty power and favourable presence. Though I am taken from you, and constrained to forsake you, yet I commend you to that God who will be careful of you, and never fail you; who hath infinite strength for your protection, and infinite wisdom for your direction, and infinite favour for your consolation. 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God,'

[1] *Παρατίθεμαι ὑμᾶς τῷ Θεῷ. Παρατίθεμαι*, significat patrocinio, curæ, ac tutelæ alterius aliquid commendare.—*Beza.* Commendare veluti commendatur depositum servandum.

And to the word of his grace, καὶ τῷ λογῷ της χάριτος αὐτοῦ. The Scripture is called God's word, because as men by their words discover their wills, so God by the Scripture doth manifest his mind and pleasure. But it is that part of Scripture which we call the gospel, which is emphatically termed here, and in some other places, the word of his grace, because it speaketh God's good-will and good-pleasure to the children of men, Acts xx. 24; Tit. ii. 11. The covenant of works which God made with Adam, and in him with all mankind, was in some respects a covenant of grace, for God was not bound to promise man eternal felicity upon his perfect obedience, but might have required it by virtue of his sovereignty and dominion. But since man's apostasy, and impossibility thereby of attaining happiness by his own works, God hath been pleased to accept of the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, on the behalf of the believing, penitent Christian; which act of infinite grace being revealed in the gospel, it is most fitly called the word of his grace. The law, as the case stands with man now, speaks nothing but fury and death, but the gospel speaks favour and life; the law wounds man with his blows, the gospel heals him with its balsam; the law condemneth man without pity to the sufferings of hell, but the gospel alloweth him a psalm of mercy, and so saveth him from the wrath to come. Now the affectionate apostle commendeth his fainting patients to this rich cordial, the word of his grace. They might think it was small comfort and a poor courtesy to be commended to a righteous and jealous God, as stubble to be committed to a consuming fire; therefore he tells them, I commend you to God, not under the notion of an angry judge, but in the relation of a gracious father, and compassionate friend, which, if ye doubt of, do but look into the gospel, which is heaven's court rolls transcribed, wherein ye may see the naked bowels of his good-will, and read his curious eternal contrivance of magnifying his grace in you, and towards you. I commend you to that word of his grace wherein every line speaks love, and each expression his tender affection to you. I know your poverty, but that word of his grace is a mine of unsearchable riches; ye are hungry, but that is bread; when ye are weary, there ye may find rest; whatsoever your conditions be, there is suitable consolation. 'And to the word of his grace,'

Which is able to build you up, τῷ δυναμένῳ ἐποικοδομουσαι. These words, with them that follow, are by Erasmus, according to our translation, referred to the word of his grace, but according to Beza and some others, God is the antecedent to this relative, who

is able to build you up, &c. The reason of the doubt is, because both are of the same gender, whereby it is uncertain to which of the two this latter part hath relation. But there is a certain truth if we refer them to either: God is able to build them up, &c.; and also the gospel or word of his grace is able to build them up, &c. God as the first cause and principal efficient, the word of his grace as the second cause and subordinate instrument. The gospel cannot do it without God, and God will not do it without the gospel. God, ordinarily, by the gospel doth both sanctify and save, build up and give an inheritance.

'Which is able to build you up.' The foundation of godliness was already laid in their hearts, but something was still wanting, a greater degree of grace and holiness. Paul knew that his brethren would not be contented barely to know Christ, but were desirous to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, and did therefore the more lament his loss, because he, as a faithful steward, had furthered the welfare of their souls, by giving them their food in due season. Now, to allay their fears of famishing for want of his care, he commends them both to the same master, and to the same meat, by which they had hitherto thriven and prospered, and which were able still to continue the same virtue, and communicate the same strength; which is able to build you up,

And to give you an inheritance, καὶ δουναὶ ὑμιν κληρονομὶαν. Two things the children of God do exceedingly desire—proficiency in grace, and perfection thereof in glory. The apostle, in his valedictory speech, commends them to that God, and to the word of his grace, which can answer both their requests, progress in holiness, and the possession of happiness, 'which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance.' Saints are heirs, joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. Heaven is their proper and peculiar inheritance: 'The inheritance of the saints in light,' Col. i. 12. The gospel or word of his grace purifieth and prepareth them for it, and also is the deeds or conveyance speaking their right and title to it; therefore is called the gospel of our salvation. God is the author and donor of it. Glory is his free gift: 'It is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom,' Luke xii. 32.

Among all them that are sanctified, ἐν τοὶς ἡγιασμένοις πᾶσιν. The inhabitants of heaven are all holy. Those that shall be glorified must first be sanctified. The inner court was a type of heaven, into which none might enter but the priests, which were holy to the Lord. Saints are all priests; a holy priesthood, Rev. i. 6.

The sum of the whole verse is thus much: 'And now, brethren,'

&c. And now, my dearly beloved brethren, since infinitely wise providence seeth fit to deprive you of my presence, and I know the groans of your spirits to be after a farther degree of sanctification here, and its consummation hereafter, I commit and commend you to God, through whose strength the word of his grace is able to give you both growth in grace while ye live, and the crown of glory when ye die, amongst all them that are prepared for it by being partakers of the same hope and holiness. 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified.'

In the words we may observe these three parts:

First, The compellation, 'brethren.' The company of saints are a society of brethren: 'Love the brotherhood.' The company of sinners are a rabble of conspirators.

Secondly, The commendation of these brethren: 'And now, brethren, I commend you.' This commendation of them is amplified,

1. By the object—(1.) To God, as the fountain of their grace and bliss; (2.) To the gospel or word of his grace, as the channel in which it was conveyed to them.

2. By the effects, which are two: (1.) Proficiency, 'which is able to build you up'; having laid the foundation, it is able to increase the building of grace; (2.) Perfection, it is able to lay the top-stone, and overlay it with glory, 'and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.'

3. The occasion, or special season of this commendation. 'And now, brethren.' No doubt Paul had many a time before commended them to God: 'Without ceasing he made mention always in his prayers;' but now, upon his leaving them, he doth in a special manner commend them to God's care and keeping: 'And now, brethren.'

I shall draw some observations from the words, and then lay down the doctrine which I intend to prosecute.

That sanctity is no enemy to civility. The apostle being to leave them, doth not abruptly turn his back upon them, but solemnly takes his leave of them. 'And now, brethren.' Some think they cannot be Christians unless they be clowns, that good works and good manners are inconsistent; but though Christianity pare off the luxuriant branches of courtesy, yet it doth not root it up; like those spices which we apply to windy fruits, it takes away the flatulency and offensiveness which may be in it, but doth

not cast it away. Civil language and a courteous carriage are, though no part of, yet an ornament to, Christianity. The saints of God are ever civil; and whereas sinners are complimental, they are cordial in all their salutes. The holy apostle spendeth the greatest part of a chapter in courteous salutations, which he would not have done had it been either unlawful or unnecessary.

That grace will turn civil courtesy into serious Christianity. The apostle doth not take a bare civil farewell of them, according to the custom of most men, but solemnly takes his leave of them by commending them to the blessed God: 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God.' A gracious man prefers his low and civil actions unto the high form of religion; wicked men debase actions that are sacred, and godly men advance actions that are civil. As the iron mine gives a tincture and relish of its own nature to all the waters which run through it, making them thereby more salubrious to our bodies; so grace gives a savour and taste of its own nature and property to all the actions about which the subject in which it is is conversant, and thereby makes them more healthful to our souls. It sanctifieth our very salutes: 'Salute one another with an holy kiss,' Rom. xvi. 16. Kissing seems to be wholly civil; but among the godly it is sacred—'an holy kiss.'[1]

That all Christians are brethren. 'And now, brethren.' Saints are all linked together in the bond of brotherhood. The Jews called all brethren of the same country; and it was the custom of the primitive Christians to call all brethren and sisters of the same communion.[2] They are brethren if we consider their relations; they have all the same Father, God: 'I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,' 2 Cor. vi. 18. They are not only adopted, but also begotten again, or regenerated, by the same God, John i. 12; James i. 21. They are all children of the same mother: 'Jerusalem which is above is free, the mother of us all,' Gal. iv. 26. They suck the same breasts, Isa. lxvi. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 2; wear the same garments, and as they grow up, feed at the same table, and shall dwell together in the same house for ever. They are united under the same head, renewed with the same hearts, and travel to the same heaven. They are brethren in regard of affection. The curtains of the tabernacle were joined together with loops, and so are true Christians with love; they love as brethren, seeking the good and welfare of each

[1] The use of kissing was frequent amongst the saints in their holy meetings.—*Tertul. de Orat.*

[2] Tertul. Apol., cap. 39.

other. A saint's talents are not an enclosure for his private profit, but a common for the advantage of others. Their desires are not confined within their own dwellings, but they reach thousands in their prayers, whom they can never reach on earth in their persons. 'For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee,' Ps. cxxii. 8; they sympathise in each other's sufferings, and rejoice in one another's solace. Every saint is a great merchant, who hath his factors in all parts of the world, trading for him at the throne of grace.

That the gospel is the word of God's grace. 'And to the word of his grace.' The word *grace* is taken in Scripture,

1. For favour or good-will. 'Grace be with you.' And so Col. i. 2, 'Grace be unto you.'

2. For the effects and fruits thereof: Jude 4, 'Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.'

The gospel in both respects is fitly termed the word of his grace—

1. Because it containeth the infinite grace and favour of the most high God to sinners. The law speaks in effect man's bottomless misery, but the gospel speaks God's boundless mercy; the law is a court of justice, but the gospel a throne of grace. Grace sits as commander-in-chief in the gospel, and, as Ahasuerus to Esther, holdeth out the golden sceptre of mercy, for poor condemned persons to touch with the hand of faith, and live. The sum of the gospel is comprehended in the song of that angelical choir: 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men.' The substance and body of God's love to man was never dissected and laid open to the view of mortals till the gospel was preached. Before, it ran as a river under ground; but in the gospel it bursts forth and sheweth itself, to refresh us with its pleasant streams. The law is, as it were, a warrant under Heaven's hand and seal for man's execution; but the gospel, like the dove, comes flying swiftly to prevent it, with the olive branch of peace and pardon in its mouth. Choosing grace, Eph. i. 5, calling grace, 2 Tim. i. 9, justifying grace, Rom. iii. 24, and glorifying grace, 1 Pet. iii. 7, are all discovered in the gospel; and therefore it may well be called the word of his grace.

2. Because the gospel is the effect and fruit of God's grace or good-will to men. Philosophers observe that dew never falleth in stormy, tempestuous weather: the dropping of the dew of the gospel on parched, scorched hearts, is a sign and fruit of serene, calm heavens. That our parts of the world, like Gideon's fleece, should

be wet with this dew when other parts are dry, this is merely from grace: 'I have caused it to rain on one city, and not upon another,' Amos iv. 7. This rain of the gospel, which cooleth heat, melloweth the hearts, and cleanseth the unholy, goeth by coasts, Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20.

3. Because the gospel is the usual means of begetting grace. As manna fell about the Israelites' tents with the dew, so grace is distilled and dropped down with the gospel. Many of the Jews heard the thunders of Sinai, the threatenings of the law, and were not moved; but the Baptist wins their children with the songs of Zion, the promises of the gospel: 'Received ye the Spirit by the preaching of the law or the hearing of faith?' The ice which is hardened by the cold, is melted with the sun. When the murderers of our Saviour heard the gospel, they were pricked to the heart, Acts ii. 37. The hard flint is broken upon the soft pillow.

That the gospel is effectual, not only for conversion, but also for edification. 'Which is able to build you up.' The gospel doth not only bring forth souls to Christ, but likewise build up souls in Christ. The natural child is nourished, when in the world, by the same seed, by a further concoction turned into milk, by which it was conceived in the womb; the spiritual child is begotten by the gospel: 'I have begotten you through my gospel;' and built up by the same: 1 Pet. ii. 2, 'As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.'

That the word of God's grace can carry men to glory. 'And to give you an inheritance.' It doth, like Moses, lead the saint out of Egypt, deliver him from bondage to his lusts, conduct him through the wilderness of the world, and also, like Joshua, bring him into Canaan, the land of promise. It is called 'the grace of God which bringeth salvation,' Titus ii. 11. It bringeth salvation to man, and it bringeth man to salvation.

That heaven is an inheritance. 'And to give you an inheritance.' An inheritance is an estate left or given by the father to his son and heir; saints are all God's sons, and his sons are all first-born, and so heirs. God's natural Son is his natural heir, but his adopted sons are his adopted heirs, and so have an inheritance given them by their Father. Others have inheritances by their births; saints have theirs by their new birth. Their inheritance is incomparable; it is the same which the natural heir hath, 'joint heirs with Christ;' earthly possessions are to it less than nothing. Their right to it is indefeasible; 'an inheritance reserved for us in heaven,' 1 Pet. i. 4.

They can never be deprived of it, either by others' cruelty, nor their own carelessness, for it is in God's keeping, reserved for us.

That the inheritance of heaven is only for them that are holy. 'Among all them that are sanctified.' None but the children of God, such as are born again, are heirs of this inheritance. All that are saved must be sanctified. The inheritance is undefiled, and so must all the inhabitants be. If a carnal, unsanctified person ever enter into that royal palace, he must first make the gospel a lie, and God a liar: 'And into it can in no wise enter anything that is defiled or unclean,' Rev. xxi. 27. All that are there are admitted into God's immediate service; and will so great a king be served in unclean vessels? Dirty feet are not for royal presence-chambers.

The doctrine which I intend to prosecute, and which will include the substance of the verse, is this:

The doctrine, That the greatest good a pastor can do for his brethren whom he must leave, is to commend them to God. 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace.'

I shall speak principally to the fountain of their being and bliss, their recommendation to God, and in the close of the sermon briefly touch the channel of the gospel, which he hath cut out as the means of conveying his blessings to the children of men. I say again, that it is the duty, and the greatest good a minister can do for his friends whom he must leave, to commend them to God. The apostle had a great love to, and tender respect for, the brethren, but how doth he manifest it? By commending them to God.

That it is the practice, duty, and greatest kindness of Christians to commit their friends to God, is visible in the Scriptures. Paul and Barnabas, when they came to Derbe, commended the brethren to the Lord, on whom they believed, Acts xiv. 23.

But especially when parents leave their children, they commit them to the care of some faithful person. When old Jacob was to die, he commends his children to the living God, Gen. xlviii. 15, 16, and 49; before Moses left the Israelites, in his swan-like song, Deut. xxxii. and xxxiii., he doth not only command them God's precept, but also commend them to God's protection.

Our blessed Saviour, who is an unparalleled pattern and precedent, being to depart out of the world and go to the Father, would not leave his disciples fatherless. He knew the hearts of his servants were heavy, that their Master was to be taken from their head; alas! what can the chicken do, when the hen under whose wings they used to be clucked and cherished was killed? therefore

he commends them to God, as the greatest good which his boundless love could do for them. ' And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,' &c., John xvii. 11–16. How affectionately, how pathetically, doth he entreat his Father to take the care and charge of them. Father, keep them, holy Father, keep them, as if he could never speak it enough. How many arguments doth he use to persuade and prevail with his Father to be the guide and guardian of his children! Father, I must leave them, oh do thou love and keep them, that they may not be left alone. Father, I beg not their immediate translation to glory, but only their preservation in an estate of grace; I desire not that they should be kept from the evil *of* affliction, but only from the evil *in* affliction, and shall I be denied? The world hates them for thy sake, and what will become of them if thou wilt not help them?

In the explication of the text I shall shew,

1. What it is for a minister to commend his friends to God, or how this is done.

2. Why it is a minister's duty, and the greatest good a pastor can do for them from whom he must part, is to commend them to God.

First, how a minister can commend his brethren and friends to God. This is done two ways, namely, by prayer and by faith.

1. By a cordial supplication to God, or by prayer. The departing parent appointeth his executor to be careful of, and faithful to, his children, and so commendeth them to him; but the departing pastor entreateth God to be gracious to, and mindful of, his people. As by preaching the minister commends God to his people's acceptation, so by prayer he commends his people to God's benediction. The principal part of the priest's office under the law, was to offer sacrifice, and to pray for the people; Aaron must bear the names of the children of Israel before the Lord. And the main work of us ministers of the gospel is to stand betwixt God and our people, by giving precepts from God to them, and by putting up prayers to God for them: ' On this wise shall ye bless the people, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee,' Num. vi. 23. We bless them when we beg of God to bless them. God blesseth imperatory, by commanding a blessing on men: ' There the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for evermore,' Ps. cxxxiii. 3. Ministers bless impetratory, by commending them to God's blessing.

God's blessing is operative, his *benedicere est benefacere;* our blessing is optative only; we wish the blessing, and that is all, but God can work the blessing.

The apostle Paul usually made prayer the Alpha and Omega, the preface and ending, of all his epistles. If we observe it well, we shall find that each of them is scented with this sweet perfume, Rom. i. 9, xv. 13, and xvi. 24; 1 Cor. i. 3, 4, and xvi. 23; 2 Cor. i. 2, 3, and xiii. 14; Gal. i. 3, and vi. 18; Eph. i. 2, 3, 15–20, and vi. 23, 24; Phil. i. 2–4, 9–11, and iv. 23; Col. i. 2, 3, and iv. 18; 1 Thes. i. 2, iii. 10, and v. 28; 2 Thes. i. 2, ii. 16, and iii. 18; 1 Tim. i. 2, and vi. 21; 2 Tim. i. 2, and iv. 22; Titus i. 4, and iii. 15; Philem. 4; Heb. xiii. 21, 22. Prayer was his salutation, and prayer was his conclusion; nay, as some persons of quality seal all their letters with their coats of arms, so the holy apostle all his epistles with prayer for the persons to whom he wrote, and gives us leave to look on all as forged where this mark was missing: 'The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen,' 2 Thes. iii. 17, 18. All Christians must pray for others; it is their general calling in part. Among the Persians, he that offered sacrifice prayed for all his countrymen, saith Herodotus, lib. i.: 'Pray one for another,' James v. But it is the particular calling of a minister. We must give ourselves to prayer; it must be the element in which we breathe and live: 'He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee,' Gen. xx. 7. Prophets, of all men, must be frequent at prayer.

But there are some persons which ministers must in a special manner commend to God in their prayers—namely, the people which God hath committed to their special charge. A good housekeeper will relieve and help his neighbours and strangers, but he hath a greater regard, and more tender respect, for his children and those of his own family. Our prayers, like Sir Francis Drake's ship, must encompass the whole world, even all in the land of the living that have not sinned the sin unto death: 'I will that supplications and prayers be made for all men,' 1 Tim. ii. 1. The higher a man is, the further he seeth, and the richer a man is, the more he relieveth; the higher a man is in holiness, the further he seeth into others' indigencies, and the richer he is in grace, the more he by prayer begs the relief of their necessities. But in the wide earth our eye must principally be on God's vineyard, to water that with our tears, and to beg the influence of heaven, for the refreshing and ripening the fruits thereof: 'Praying always with all prayers for

all saints,' Eph. vi. 18. The tongue may well pray for the other members of the same body. Christ hath taught us this in that prayer of prayers, as a father calleth it. 'Our Father.' *Father* speaketh our faith in God; *our* enjoineth charity to our brethren; but in this vineyard our love and labour must be specially for that part of it which is committed to our trust. Of all debts, specialties must first be paid. Prayer is a debt: 'God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you,' saith Samuel; and in regard of our particular parishes, a bond, a specialty: 'We are bound to thank God always for you,' 2 Thes. i. 3. The minister's prayers, as well as his parts, are the common stock of the parish, in which all have a share. Or as the buckets which hang up in the churches at London, they are useful and helpful to any part of the city as occasion is, but specially for the benefit of those parishes in which they are. We must, as some shopkeepers, drive a trade afar off, beyond the seas, but be sure not to be idle in our shops at home. We must mind others at the throne of grace, but be sure to remember our own people. He that starveth his family, is not likely to feast his neighbours.

2. Secondly, By a fiducial expectation of good, or by faith. We commend our business to a friend when we cast on him the care of it, and trust him with it. Ministers commend their friends and affairs to God, by beseeching his favour towards them, and believing that he will be tender of them. We have many cares and fears about our dear friends whom we do love, and whom we must leave; but faith easeth our hearts by committing them into safer hands. The burden of all the churches lay on Paul, and surely it was heavy enough to have broken his back, had he not learned the art of faith, by which he removed it to stronger shoulders: 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee,' Ps. lv. 22. Here is our charge, and our discharge. Our charge is, to cast our burden on the Lord; and our discharge, he will sustain thee. The apostle praiseth God for the grace given to the Philippians, and prayeth to God for its increase: 'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine making request with joy,' Phil. i. 3–5. But mark how he enliveneth his prayer by the soul of faith, knowing that without it, it would be but a dead corpse: 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,' ver. 6.

Our prayers for our people will be to little purpose if faith be not joined with them. There are, indeed, many blessings in the womb

of prayer, but without the midwifery of faith, it will never be delivered: 'Whatsoever ye ask in my name, believing, ye shall receive.' Prayer is the key that openeth God's treasury, but faith is the hand which takes out and receives of his infinite bounty. Prayer must have a promise, or else it is a vessel without a bottom; and that promise must have faith, or else the vessel lieth still, and cannot stir at all. When a full gale of faith fills the sails, then the vessel of prayer launcheth forth most hopefully, and returneth with its riches freight.

When God had acquainted Abraham with his intention to destroy Sodom, Abraham, sensible of his nephew's danger, commends him to God by prayer and by faith, Gen. xviii. 23. Now mark the issue; God remembered Abraham, and brought Lot out of Sodom, Gen. xix. 29. Abraham's prayer hit the mark at which it aimed, but it is because the eye of faith levelled the arrow.

Faith honours God, by committing to him so great a trust as the inestimable souls of his people; and God honours faith, by being true to his trust, and answering fully his chosen's and suppliant's faith. The children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers. Faith engaged God in the combat, and therefore they could not but conquer, 2 Chron. xiii.

He that prayeth for himself, and not for others, is fitly compared to a hedgehog, who laps himself within his own soft down, and turns his bristles to all the world beside. And he that prayeth for others without reliance on God through Christ for audience, works at the labour in vain, and, like Penelope, undoeth by night all that he wrought in the day. The truth is, we lie to God in prayer, if we do not rely on him after prayer.

So, then, for the preacher to commend his brethren or friends to God, is in brief thus much: To open their cases and conditions to God in prayer, earnestly begging the relief of their indigencies, and believing that through Christ he will supply all their necessities.

In the next place, I come to the reasons why the pastor must commend his brethren and friends to God, and they shall be drawn from these three heads: from God, from the world, and from the brethren themselves. God's propriety in them, the world's enmity against them, and their own impotency, do all require that they should be commended to God's care and charge.

I shall now shew the necessity of commending them to God; that it is the greatest good will appear in the use, because he is the most able, loving, and faithful friend.

First, In regard of God, his propriety in them. None so fit to take care of the child as its father. A brute will venture itself, and encounter with that which is much stronger, in defence of her own. The fearful hen, which hath nothing but flight to secure herself from the dog, will yet hazard a duel against the kite, to protect her little chickens. The blessed Jesus gives this ground why he commends his church to God: 'I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me out of the world; for they are thine,' John xvii. 9. I pray not for strangers, nor enemies to thee, but for thine own people, thine own family, for them thou hast chosen, called, and loved, for they are thine; thy jewels, thy portion, thy temple, thy children. Men in a flame will venture far to secure their own jewels. Naboth would hazard and lose his life, rather than part with his own portion. What cost will some be at, and what care will they take, to keep their own houses in good repair. David would have died, that his own son might have lived. Propriety is a sufficient ground for special protection. God doth, by a general providence, take care of all his creatures, because of his general propriety in them, because they are his creatures. He feeds the young ravens, and satisfies the hunger of the sparrows. He is, upon this account, the preserver of man and beast; but his special providence is exercised about them in whom he hath a special propriety. The saints are his λαὸς περιούσιος, peculiar people, and therefore he hath over them a peculiar protection. Hence his peculiar care is compared to a bird flying over the nest where her young ones are, Isa. xxxi. 5. He abhors him as an infidel who doth not provide for his own; surely, then, he will take care of his own himself. Aristotle saith propriety is the ground of all the toil and labour in the world. If all things were common, every one would be careless; but because it is their own ground, therefore they dung, and plough, and sow it; because it is their own wealth, therefore they work hard to increase it. God hath a propriety in his people; they are his by election. The new creature was conceived in God's eternal purpose before he was born. They are his by redemption; he paid an infinite price for them. They are his by regeneration, begotten by him, and born of him. They are his by promise: 'I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' Now, because they are his, therefore they go to him for protection: 'I am thine, save me,' Ps. cxix. 94; and therefore he affords them his special and gracious presence: 'Israel is holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of his increase; all

that devour him shall offend; evil shall befall them,' Jer. ii. 3. None can wrong God in anything that is his at an easy rate.

Secondly, The world's enmity against them. The sheep need some dogs to defend them, that have so many wolves to devour them. They who have many and mighty enemies, surely want some faithful, able friend. This was another ground why Christ commended his disciples to God: 'I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them; because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,' John xvii. 14. Father, keep thy children, for they are surrounded with a wicked world, whose tender mercies are cruelties. Alas! what shall become of thy lambs, who are ever amongst roaring, ravenous lions, if thou shouldst not protect them?

The old enmity between the serpent and the woman is not yet, neither ever will be, worn out. There are natural antipathies between some creatures, for which little reason can be given; as between the lion and the cock, the elephant and boar, the camel and horse. The serpent, saith Aristotle, will rather fly into the fire than come near the boughs of a wild ash; but there is a greater antipathy between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: 'An unjust man is abomination to the just, and he that is upright in his way is abomination to the wicked,' Prov. xxix. 27. The eagle, saith the philosopher, hath continually enmity with the dragon and serpent. Saints are eagles; they have enmity with the serpentine brood, but it is *odium offensionis;* they hate wicked men's sins, but not their persons. They loathe the poison, but not the cup in which it is. As tender physicians, they hate the noisome disease, but pity the patient. Thus the unjust man is abomination to the just; but the wicked hate the godly, *odio inimicitiæ*, with a hatred of perfect enmity, wishing evil to their persons, and working it to the utmost of their power. They that are born after the flesh persecute them that are born after the spirit. Their rage is so great, that, were their power answerable to their malice, they would cut Israel off from being a people, that the name thereof might be had no more in remembrance.

Indeed every Christian may say, as David, 'They hated me without a cause.' The world hath no just cause to hate and curse the people of God; but there is a reason of all their rage and wrath, enmity and cruelty, against the saints; and that is, because they are saints. Wherefore did Cain imbrue his hands in his own brother's blood? 'Because his own works were evil, and his

brother's righteous,' 1 John iii. 12. The light is burdensome and grievous to owls and bats, and all night birds; the light of a saint's holiness is offensive to sinners, that are used only to the deeds of darkness; nay, the greater the light, the more painful to their sore eyes. Swine cannot endure sweet odours. Those that are unclean, and delight to wallow in the mire of vice, hate the fragrant perfumes of grace. The pleasant smell of spikenard is poisonous to them. Horse-flies are killed with ointments.

Now if saints fight with enemies that are more politic and powerful than themselves, they must be conducted by one that is strong indeed, or they will be forced to leave the field. Besides, it is an engagement to God to help his people, because, for his sake, the world hates them. A prince counts it a dishonour to forsake him who hath ventured his life and lost his limbs in his cause and quarrel.

Thirdly, Their own impotency. They are not able to take care of themselves, and therefore must be commended to another. In the civil law, there is provision made for outcasts; there are some hospitals to entertain them. By the common law, if parents die, there are officers appointed to take care of poor fatherless children. 'With God the fatherless find mercy,' Hosea xiv. 3. Those that are orphans want a guardian. Children which cannot go alone, need their mothers' helping hand. The strongest Christian is but a child, and except God hold him by his right hand, will every day get many falls and knocks. The greatest saint is but a glass without a bottom, which cannot stand any longer than it is held; hence they are compared to a new-born infant, which is both polluted and ready to perish, if none take care of it, Ezek. xvi. 5.

If believers' dangers be temporal, their defence must be the almighty and eternal God, or they are foiled. 'We have no strength, but our eyes are unto thee,' saith 2 Chron. xx. 12. They cannot do the ordinary actions of nature without his assistance, who is the God of all grace: 'In him we live, and move, and have our beings,' Acts xvii. 14. They live in him, and move by him, as they have their beings from him. If the fountain fail, the streams soon are dried up; if God denieth his influence, man droppeth into earth. *Inesse est de essentia creaturæ*, Inherence is essential to the creature.

When spiritual perils overtake them, they cannot hold out without God's protection. When Hezekiah was left but a little in his own hands, how much doth he discover the pride of his own heart. Though Peter seemed so resolute and valiant a captain, as to go

before all the apostles in courage, yet when Christ did but for an hour or two withdraw, how shamefully doth he fly back like a coward! The weak breath of a maid bloweth down the strong castle of his confidence. If God do but depart from Samson, his strength departs also, and the Philistines may make what pastime with him they please. The holiest man is no match for a devil. If our God leave us, our defence is departed from us, and the uncircumcised one will make sport with us indeed.

All our power for sacred performances is wholly from another. 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything,' 2 Cor. iii. 4. To think, we suppose, is an easy thing; but unless God help, it is too hard for us. God gave Israel their manna every day, or they could not have subsisted. God must give us fresh supplies of his Spirit in every duty, or they cannot be rightly performed. The greatest fulness of a Christian is not the fulness of a fountain, but of a vessel, which, because always is letting out, must be always taking in. The conduit, which is continually running, must be always receiving from the river. The Christian's disbursements are great and constant; therefore such must his incomes from God be, or he will quickly prove a bankrupt.

Habitual grace itself lieth as water at the bottom of the pump, and cannot by all our labour be raised up till God pour in his exciting grace. The flame doth not more depend upon the fire than we upon God. Things that are weak lean on that which is strong; the wood-vine, not able to stand of itself, clings about the hedge or tree, and thereby gets to some height. The weakest will go to the walls if not protected.

This reason is implied in Christ's petition to his Father: 'Father, keep them.' As if he had said, They are poor shiftless children, that can neither stand nor go without help; therefore they must not be left alone. Alas! they are such pitiful, helpless creatures that any one may wrong them of the legacies which I have purchased for them, and bequeathed to them; they will lose the grace I have given them, and fall into the sins which I have kept them from, whilst I was with them, if they be but one moment out of thine eye and arms; therefore, Father, keep them. If they who were to be endowed with an extraordinary measure of the Spirit were unable to keep themselves, much more unable are we; if pillars cannot stand of themselves, much less can weak reeds.

Having spoken somewhat in the explication, I shall proceed to the application of the point.

First, It informeth us of the piety of a true pastor. He com-

mends his people to God; this is his character. When others curse their people, and commit them to the devil, he blesseth his parishioners, and commendeth them to God. The mouth of some indeed, like Rabshakeh's, are full of railings, and their tongues are even black with blasphemies against God and his people; though their curses are but like false fire, which may flash a little, but will do no execution; but the faithful ministers of the gospel have learned other language—as they are blessed men, so they are blessing men. Some ministers are ministers of Satan; all their business is to accuse the brethren. They are the saints' enemies, because they follow the thing that good is. Publicans bless them that bless them; but though the people of God pity them, and pray for them, and beg the blessing of God on them, yet they, far worse than publicans, return cursing for blessing. But true shepherds seek and study the welfare of their sheep. The false mother did not care though the child were divided and slain, but the true mother cried out, 'Divide not the child, in nowise slay it; for her bowels yearned towards her child,' 1 Kings iii. 26. Ministers are called fathers, and their people their children. Wicked ministers are false fathers, and care not what becomes of their children. The great murderer of souls may slay them at his pleasure, and they will not open their mouths against him; nay, too too often they help him drive the poor silly sheep out of their pastures to the slaughterhouse. But godly ministers, like true fathers, endeavour by all means the welfare of their children; they cry out, with Hagar, 'How can I see the death of my child?' How can I see the eternal death of my poor, ignorant, carnal neighbours? They open their mouths, and their hearts too, (for their bowels yearn towards their children,) for their people to God, as the ruler to Christ, 'Sir, come down quickly ere my child die.' Lord, such unregenerate, scandalous children whom thou didst commit to my charge, are at the very point of death. I have acquainted them from thee of the evil and end of their wicked ways, but cannot obtain so much as a sober hearing; but, Lord, if thou wouldst speak to them they would hear thee; thou canst open their eyes, break their stony hearts, and make them stoop. Lord, come down quickly ere my children die, nay, die eternally.

Secondly, It discovereth the great privilege of a gracious people. When they are deserted by man, they are commended to God. Those that part them and their pastor cannot part them and their God. 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God.' Though Christians may be left by weak, earthly friends, yet they shall never be forsaken by their Almighty heavenly Father. Christ prayeth

for them in heaven, Christians pray for them on earth; how rich must they needs be who have a stock in such faithful hands, employed for their use in both worlds. It was the misery of Julian that the church shut him out of her prayers, and that was a forerunner of his sad future doom. It is the felicity of true Christians that they are in all the saints' prayers.

All the felicity of man is bound up in the favour of God, and therefore to be commended to his care must needs be a great comfort. I must tell you no people can enjoy a greater privilege. Israel was famous for this above all the nations on the face of the earth; 'For what nation is there so great?' saith Moses, Deut. iv. 7. They that consider Israel's outward condition, may somewhat wonder how Israel should be glorious beyond all comparison. Israel was now wandering in a desolate, howling wilderness, having no food for their bellies but what a miracle must send them in, and no raiment for their bodies but that on their backs. Heaven must rain down bread, or they must perish with hunger; a rock must be broached to give them water, or they die for thirst; their clothes must grow with their bodies, and not wear out neither, or they must go naked; they had not a house to hide their heads in, but some slender tents; turn which way they will, they fall into the paws of ravenous beasts, or into the hands of men no less cruel. Yet in this barren desert, and in the midst of these distractions, no nation in the world, were their tables never so richly spread, and their wardrobes never so largely filled, can compare with Israel for honour and happiness. But what is the reason? Truly none but this, God was their patron and guardian. 'For what nation is there so great which hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things we call upon him for?' Other nations might excel them in number, in treasure, in creatures; other nations might have honours and pleasures nearer them; but every nation was inferior to them, because no nation had God so near them. It is the near approach of this sun that causeth a spring and summer of light and gladness, of warmth and delights. That nation from which he departeth, whatsoever they enjoy, have but long dismal nights, and sharp bitter frosts.

When men are said in Scripture to be obnoxious to all evil, they are only said to be forsaken by the chiefest good: 'I have forsaken my house, I have left my heritage,' Jer. xii. 7. But what is the fruit of God's forsaking his house? Cannot the building stand though the workman be gone? No, it is tumbling down apace. 'I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hands of her

enemies. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness,' ver. 10. When this fence is removed, the vineyard is quickly destroyed. When David would pray his worst against the church's enemies, what doth he beg? 'Let them be confounded,' Ps. xii. 5, or disappointed in all their designs. This is much, to conceive with sorrow and to have hard labour, and then to bring forth nothing. 'Let them be as the grass upon the house-top, which withereth before it be grown up,' ver. 6. Let them perish speedily, suddenly, and irrecoverably. This is more. The former was bad, that they should take much pains to no purpose; but this is worse, that their pieces that they discharge against others should not only miss their mark, but recoil upon themselves. But all this and much more, ver. 8, which the psalmist addeth as an amplification of the latter, 'Neither let them that go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you;' this is worst of all. David knew that if they were out of God's care they should be under his curse, and then they should be miserable indeed. As an eclipse of the sun darkens the creation, though the other lights of heaven shine never so brightly, so whatsoever comforts any man enjoyeth, if God be wanting he is miserably woeful. It is Seneca's observation of Alexander, He overcame the Persians, but he slew Callisthines; he conquered to the ocean, but he slew Callisthines, &c. That the slaughter of his friend drew a black line over all his honourable enterprises, and, as too much shadow to a picture, sullied the glory of them. It may be said of some men, they have large estates, but no God; they have high preferments, but no God; they have excellent parts and natural accomplishments, but no God. This want of a God gives a dash to all the other, and, like copperas, turns all their wine, be it never so rich, into ink and blackness.

On the other side, the fruition of God is the greatest favour. As some write of the crystal, that what stone soever it toucheth, it puts a lustre and loveliness on it; so whomsoever God approacheth to, he puts beauty and glory on the soul.

Because the witness of an adversary is a double testimony, let Balaam, who, as some write of a toad, had a pearl in his head, though his body was poisonous, give in his evidence: 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!' Num. xxiv. 5. He speaks both by way of interrogation and admiration; their tents were so comely, and their tabernacles so lovely, that their very enemy was affected and ravished with them. But whence came Israel to be such a well marshalled army, that he who came to fight against them, thinks them beyond all compare, nay, doth himself

admire their postures and order, their glory and gallantry? Why, from the presence of their Lord-general. 'The Lord their God is with them, the shout of a king is amongst them.'

The new temple, which the Spirit of God describeth so exactly in its various dimensions, and curious perfections, such as should never have parallel, hath all its glorious privileges from God's gracious presence: 'The name of that city from that day shall be, The Lord is there,' Ezek. xlviii. 35.

It is observable, Exod. xxxiii. 1–4, that God seemeth to make Israel a very gracious offer: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, and the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite; for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way.' Yet mark how the people take this bountiful tender: 'And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on his ornaments,' ver. 4. What evil tidings were here, 1. To have an angel their guide and guardian: 'I will send an angel before thee.' Surely that nurse would have been very tender of his Lord's son, his first-born. 2. To have all their enemies conquered: 'And I will drive out the Canaanites.' Might not Israel march along without fear, when God had engaged that all their foes should be thrown at their feet. 3. To be conducted to the goodliest country under the cope of heaven, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to a place that was the paradise of the earth, and the fittest to be the type of heaven. Would not thousands have valued such a promise at a high price? What was there in all this which called for mourning, that the Israelites take it so heavily, and lay it so much to heart? Truly this, the want of God's presence, which could not be made up by all these privileges, therefore Moses prays, 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence. Lord, it is better to be in a howling, barren wilderness with thy presence, than in Canaan without thee.' It is not a glorious angel's being our captain which can give us true comfort; it is not the casting down our enemies that can lift us up in glory; it is not the pleasant land flowing with milk and honey that can please us, without thy presence. If thou leave us, all our Isaacs, do they promise us never so much joy or laughter, are Benonis, sons of our sorrows, and Ichabods, the glory, the honour, the happiness is departed from Israel: 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence.' But here is the privilege of saints, they

have God's presence: 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.'

Thirdly, Here is comfort for Christians; they are commended to the living God's care. The apostle had little to give his sorrowful friends, but he would speak for them to that King who was able and willing to give them all things. And indeed this was his greatest charity. By bodily alms he had opened his own purse, but by commending them to God he opened heaven's treasury. Paul's prayers were more worth to them than the empire of the whole world. The apostle was a right courtier; he observed his prince's will, and drew up his petitions according to his pleasure, and therefore knew they should be prevalent. Joab did not doubt of success, when he set the woman of Tekoah a-work, for that which David desired more than himself.

Beloved friends, I esteem it my duty and privilege that I may write after the apostle's pious copy. Ye are the people to which I was first called to be a pastor; though opportunity hath sometimes been offered for greater preferment, yet I still waived all thoughts of leaving my first love, and removal to any other parish. I have been amongst you these eleven years, and cannot wholly complain that I have spent my strength in vain, and laboured in vain; some have acknowledged that they are the seals of my ministry, others, that God hath made me instrumental for their increase in grace. God's power hath appeared in my weakness, and his mercy been manifest in my unworthiness, yet, alas! how many of you have had the dark side of this glorious pillar of the gospel all this while towards you, which is matter of sad lamentation! Oh how speechless will they be at the day of Christ, who, after so many years' public and private preaching of the word to them, shall be found in a Christless, graceless estate. Surely none sink so deep into hell as they who are pressed down thither under the weight of the gospel.

I must, notwithstanding this ground of unspeakable grief, admire that free grace which hath made me helpful to any one soul's good. Besides that, I enjoyed more of God in his ordinances amongst you, than ever I have enjoyed all my life. I cannot but acknowledge that many of you have had much hearty kindness and respect for me, not only above my deserts, but much above what any parish that I have known or heard of in the county have had for their minister. I may say as Paul did, My joy was the joy of you all that feared God; but now the providence of God is parting us, I know not better how to speak my love and faithfulness to you than by imi-

tating this holy pattern in the text, and commending you to God and the word of his grace. Indeed, all is in this one God; if he charge himself with you, none can hurt you; if he be yours, everything will help you. When Alexander asked Porus, his prisoner, how he would be used, Porus answered, *Βασιλικῶς*, Like a king. Alexander asked the same question again, he gave the same answer still. Do you desire no more? said Alexander. No, saith he, all is in that one word, (Plut.) If it were demanded of you to whom ye would be commended, I hope ye would answer *to God*, for ye cannot but know that all good is in one God. The covenant of grace is a rich mercy, to which all the crowns and empires in the world are but nits and nothings; but this is the Sun which makes that heaven so glorious; this is the sum and substance of it, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' The design of the Son of God in his birth and death was certainly high and honourable. It was a noble end that was in the eye of such an agent, but it was no more than to beg and buy of God to take care of man, whom for his rebellion he had cast off: 'He suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,' 1 Pet. iii. 18. Living David, when his soul was amongst lions, and ready to be torn in pieces every hour, commits it into God's hands: 'Into thy hands, Lord, I commit my spirit,' Ps. xxxi. 4. The dying Redeemer, who knew the worth of that inestimable jewel, his own soul, by the price which he paid for the souls of others, desired no other cabinet to have it laid up in: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' To commend you to God is all that I can do for you, and it is indeed all that ye can desire of me. Were you my nearest relations, and the object of never so dear affections, though you were as near and dear to me as my own soul, if I had the strongest engagement to you imaginable, and the greatest obligations possible, I could do no more, I need do no more, than to commend you to God. Therefore give me leave, now I am taking my leave of you, to commend you to God. 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God.'

First, I commend you to his special favour and affection. The good-will of God is such a lump of sugar as will sweeten the bitterest cup; it hath a virtue in it which will turn the smallest liquor into cordial water. The little bird in her small down nest sings pleasantly, when the great birds in their large thorny nests have but harsh voices. The saint in the soft bed of God's special love sleepeth comfortably, when the wicked in their high places, great preferments, for want of this are in little ease. His general love is like the ordinary beams of the sun, which convey light and heat for

the refreshment of all the world. So the Lord is good to all; his mercy is over all his works; but his special love is like the beams of the sun united in a glass, which, passing by others, fires the object only. God's love to his new creatures in Christ is burning love; he hath choice good, and good-will too, for his chosen ones: 'Let me see the good of his chosen. Look upon me, and be merciful to me, as thou art to them that fear thy name.' It is said of Socrates, he prized the king's countenance above his coin.

A kiss from God is of greater value than all the kingdoms on earth. The Christian can travel merrily, though his way be dirty under foot, if the heavens do but favour him, and it be clean over head: If in the light of a king's countenance there be life; and his favour be quickening and refreshing as a cloud of the latter rain, Prov. xvi. 15; what is there then in the light of God's countenance! If a heathen could say, *Contemno minutos istos deos, modo Jovem propitium habeam*, I care not for those petty gods and demi-gods, so I can have but Jupiter's good-will; surely a saint may say, I care not for men's frowns, or devils' fury, so I may obtain but the blessed God's favour.

This special favour of God is a pearl of such price, that it was bought with the blood of Christ, and none can beg a greater for themselves or others. This was David's prayer for himself: 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me,' Ps. iv. As the single saint, so the church: 'Cause thy face to shine upon thy servants, and we shall be saved,' Ps. lxxx. Believers who love their neighbours as themselves can desire nothing better or greater.

Joseph loved Benjamin entirely: 'His bowels yearned upon his brother,' Gen. xliii. 29, 30. But how doth he shew it? What doth he request for him? 'God be gracious to thee, my son.' Daniel, who fasted, prayed, and was sorely affected with the church's afflictions, when he poured out his very heart to God for them, and would sum up all his prayers into one petition; this is it: 'The Lord make his face to shine upon his sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake,' Dan. ix. 17. The prayer of the high priest for the people was to this purpose: 'The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you,' Num. vi. 24. Affectionate Paul's lips spake the same language on the behalf of his Corinthians: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all,' 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

Now to this God, in whose favour is life, Ps. xxx., nay, whose loving-kindness is better than life, Ps. lxiii., I commend you, and

my prayer shall be, 'God be merciful to you, and bless you, and cause his face to shine upon you,' Ps. lxvii. 1.

Secondly, I commend you to his special care and protection. Angels are the church's guardians: 'He shall give his angels charge over thee;' but God himself is captain of the saints' life-guard. He is Lord of hosts.

It was an honour to David, and granted to him by Achish as a special favour, to be keeper of his head for ever; but it is an infinite condescension in the glorious God; yet this office he is pleased to take upon him, to be keeper of his saints' heads, or their head-keeper for ever. Nay, he is known by this name, 'He that keepeth Israel.' And if you would know how he keepeth them, truly so diligently that he saith, 'I keep it night and day'; they are every moment within the view of his favourable eye, and under the guard of his almighty arm, Isa. xxvii. 4; and so tenderly, that he is said to keep them as the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8, which is the tenderest piece, the crystalline humour, say naturalists, of the tenderest part of man's body; of which nature is so tender, that she strongly guards it with tunicles. A great blow is better borne on the back, than a small touch on the eye. *Oculus et fama non patiuntur jocos.*

God's providence extendeth to all his creatures; it is like the sun, of universal influence, but in a special manner it is operative for the safety of his saints:[1] 'He is the Saviour of all men, (that is, in respect of preservation or temporary salvation,) but especially of them that believe,' 1 Tim. iv. Godly men are compared to wheat, wicked men to chaff. Good husbands will not spoil their chaff, but they are specially careful of their good corn. When a fire breaketh out, God may leave sinners, as lumber, to be consumed, but he will be sure that his saints, which are his jewels, shall be saved. The church is God's house, and therefore that shall be well guarded, whatsoever be neglected: 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong on the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him,' 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

The words contain, 1. The universality of God's providence. His eyes walk the rounds; as Satan's feet go to and fro through the whole earth to devour, so God's eyes run to and fro through the whole earth to defend. Diana's temple was burnt down when she was busy at Alexander's birth, and could not be at two places together; but God is present everywhere, at the same time; and therefore his church, which is his temple, can never suffer through

[1] Deus sic curat universos quasi singulos, sic singulos quasi solos.—*Aug.*

his absence. Though heaven be God's palace, yet it is not his prison. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth.

2. The efficacy of his providence, to shew himself strong. God fights with his eyes as well as his hands; he doth not only see the people's dangers, but save them from it. When the philosopher, in a starry night, was in danger of shipwreck, he cried out, Surely I shall not perish, there are so many eyes of providence over me. King Philip said, he could sleep safely because his friend Antipater watched for him. God watcheth and wardeth for his people always.

If God forsake a people, every enemy and evil will quickly find them: 'They are bread for us, for their defence is departed from them,' Num. xiv. 9. The outlying deer are shot, while they within the pale are safe. The Romans in their wars used to call out their tutelar gods of those cities they besieged, as judging them invincible while they remained there, but easily won if they departed. When God left the Israelites, though but for a little while, the Holy Ghost said they were naked, Exod. xxxii. 25. How naked? Not for want of raiment or weapons of war, but for want of God's presence and protection, saith Junius.[1]

Whilst God continueth with you, ye are safe; if trials and troubles come, run under the shelter of this shield; if he doth not prevent the evil of affliction, he will protect you from the evil in affliction. When the city of Shechem was taken, the inhabitants fled to the tower. God is a strong tower, Prov. x., that no cannon can pierce, and he is a high tower, which no ladder can scale, no arrow can reach, Ps. xviii.

As it was said of the tribunal of Cassius,[2] that it was *piorum rupes et reorum scopulus*, a rock of refuge to the good, a rock of revenge to the bad; so it may be said of God, he is a refuge for the oppressed saint, a present help in time of trouble, though he wound the heads of sinners.

Now to this God, whose power is an all-sufficient shelter, and whose special providence is sure protection, at whose beck and bidding are all creatures in heaven and earth, who hath infinite wisdom to direct you, and infinite strength to support you, I commend you, and my prayer shall be: The Lord preserve you from all evil; the Lord preserve your soul; the Lord preserve you in your goings out, and in your comings in, from this time forth and for ever, Ps. xii. 1, 7, 8.

Thirdly, In a word, I commend you to his universal benediction;

[1] Non veste, sed gratia et præsidio Dei.—*Jun. in loc.* [2] Valer. Maxim.

to his blessings in all your undertakings and concernments; as to his grace to affect you in the midst of the world's hatred, and to his power to protect you in the midst of all hardships, so to his presence to prosper you in all the works of your hands. The fruitfulness of the earth depends wholly upon the influence of heaven. If the sun withhold its heat, and the clouds their moisture, all things decay and wither. The success of all your actions depend on God's benediction. If he deny his concurrence, nothing prospers: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour but in vain that build it,' Ps. cxxvii. 1. It is lost labour to undertake the keeping up that house which God will have pulled down. It is to no purpose to plough that field which God will have lie fallow. Neither men can help you in civil things, nor the means of grace in spirituals, unless God afford his assistance. Some philosophers tell us that God is the soul of the world; as the soul is in every part of the body, so God in every part of the world. Sure I am, as the body moveth not, nor any part of it, but as it is animated and acted by the soul, so neither can the world, or anything in it, but as it is enlivened and acted by God. He is the *primum mobile*, which sets all the other orbs in motion.

It is said of David, that he prospered whithersoever Saul sent him, 1 Chron. xi. 9; but what was the spring of the watch, which caused all the wheels to move so regularly? 'For God was with him.' It is his gracious presence alone which gives success to every enterprise.

His blessing can turn not only water into wine, temporal mercies into spiritual benefits, but even poison into wholesome food, every stone thrown at you by your enemies into a precious stone; he can cause the wrath of men, as the hunter useth the rage of the dogs for his own ends, to work, not only for his praise, but also for your profit; as a wise governor, meeting with opposite factions in a state, while each studieth and striveth to undermine the other, serveth his own ends, and secureth his own interest by both. The wise and powerful God, while wicked men plot against his people, makes them to conspire for his people. The world's actings are against the saints intentionally, in regard of the malice of their hearts, but they are for the saints eventually, in regard of God's overruling hand. That knife which wicked men endeavour to thrust into some vital part of the believer to kill him, doth but light upon some imposthume, and thereby tend to his cure. The scorching sun of persecution doth but ripen him for a glorious harvest.

Now to this God, who can blow upon all his enemies' plots and they perish; who can breathe with his Spirit upon his people's actions and they prosper; who can cause all his providences to tend to your spiritual profit and eternal peace, I commend you; and my prayer shall be, 'The Lord hear you in the day of trouble, and the name of the God of Jacob defend you; send you help from his sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion; grant you according to your hearts' gracious desires, and fulfil all your counsels,' Ps. xx. 2, 3, 4.

For your further comfort, know that this God to whom ye are commended is an able friend, a loving friend, and a faithful friend, and therefore it is the greatest good I can do for you.

First, God is the most able friend. To have a friend at court is a great courtesy, because such a one can command much; but what is it then to have God for your friend, who can command all things? God is able to do more for you than you can ask or think. He is thirty times called *Almighty* in Job; he can do above all expressions, beyond all apprehensions. What cannot he do for you, who made the whole world of nothing, and hangs the massy earth upon nothing?

He is able to defend you from whatsoever is hurtful. There is a dialogue between a heathen and a Jew after the Jews' return from captivity, all nations round about them being enemies to them. The heathen asked the Jew how he and his countrymen could hope for any safety, because, saith he, every one of you is a silly sheep compassed about with fifty wolves. Ay but, saith the Jew, we are kept by such a shepherd as can kill all those wolves when he pleaseth. God can with a breath, a puff, blast all the plots of his enemies, and cause their persons to perish. How happy are they then who have him for their stronghold! The Egyptians had an idol called Baalzephon, lord of the watch-tower, whose office was to fright such fugitive Jews as fled from their masters; but it seems he was asleep when the Israelites marched out of Egypt in a full body. God is pleased to call himself the watchman of his people, but he is such a watchman as neither slumbereth or taketh those short sleeps by day, nor sleepeth, or hath any long sleep by night; his eyes never close; all his thoughts are waking thoughts for the good of his people.

If enemies come before them, he is the Lord of hosts, if behind them, he is their rearward. It was said of the Palladium in Troy, that whilst that image remained there the city was impregnable,

and that till the Greeks found out a stratagem to steal that idol away, they could not take it. Whatever fancy there was in that, this is a truth, that God is the defence of a people, and while he is present they are safe.

Are your dangers bodily? he can bear off those blows. No evil can arrest you without leave from this King. All his servants are courtiers, and thereby privileged persons. He can make a hedge about yourselves, your houses, and all that ye have, as about Job, chap. i. 10, and then neither men nor devils can make a gap for any to enter and injure you. Hesiod speaks of thirty thousand demigods that were φυλακες ἀνθρωπῶν, keepers of men; the true God keepeth his in a pavilion, as a prince his favourite, from the mischief of others' envy and malice, Ps. xxxi. 20.

If afflictions be near, he will not be far off. He ventures his fortune in the same bottom with his people: 'When thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee; and through the waters, it shall not come nigh thee,' Isa. xliii. 2. If the church be a burning bush, it will not be consumed, because God is in it. As it is safe in the fire, so also in the water; though it be a vessel, as that wherein the disciples were sailing in a rough sea, tossed up and down with tempestuous winds and boisterous waves, nay, filled almost with waters, and ready to sink, yet there is no fear, because Christ is in it; for though he seem to sleep, waiting only for a fit opportunity to manifest and magnify his power, yet when the storm comes, he will be sure to awake, and with his word of command to cause a calm. The church, as Jerome saith of Arcturus, *semper versatur, nunquam mergitur*, is much tossed, but never drowned: 'God is in the midst of her, she shall never be moved; he shall defend her, and that right early.'

God is said to ride on the heavens for his people's help, Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27. That is, either he will come speedily, as the heavens move swiftly, for his people's deliverance; he will not delay till it be too late, but prevent them with his love: or he hath power, and will command all his creatures to be serviceable to his church's safety: 'He rideth on the heavens for thy help.' As a man that rides on a horse can command it or turn it, and wind it with a curb and bit which way he pleaseth, so can the omnipotent God command the heavens and all their host for his people's help. Though enemies come with open mouth to swallow the church up quickly, yet she will be gravel in their teeth; and should they ever take her down, as the whale did Jonah, yet God will force them

to vomit her up again, and make them find, by woeful experience, that she is too hard a morsel for the strongest persecutors' stomachs to digest.

Are your fears spiritual? God is able to be your defence. It is probable your suspicions are great, that you shall fall off or fall away. The world is a slippery place, but he is able to keep you from falling, Jude 24. We are apt to fall on the right hand by its allurements; its rich wine is apt to intoxicate our brains, and make us stumble. We are apt to fall on the left hand by its affrightments; as the silver of its comforts fouls our fingers, so the fire of its cross is apt to black and defile us. Those that travel in rugged ways and on stony lanes often fall, but God is able to 'keep you from falling.' If God keep his hold of you, there is no fear but ye will keep your feet, and your ground too. 'We are kept by his power, through faith unto salvation.' His power and his love are the eagles' wings upon which the saints are carried out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and safely conveyed to Canaan.

He can keep you from falling two ways.

1. He can deny temptations to you, if he see they will be too hard for you. All have not the same faith, therefore all are not tried in the same fire; he may give a strong purge or vomit to a strong man, but will not to a babe in grace. He knoweth whether the armour will bow, and if it will, he can prevent the bullet. He is acquainted with the hardiest soldiers in his army, and them he will call to the hardest service, Rev. iii. 10. When the weather is very bad he will not venture his sickly child abroad.

2. He can enable you to foil the tempter. Little David, in his strength, can conquer great Goliath. He kept Joseph's soul from being so much as singed—miraculously as the three children's bodies—by that great fire which his mistress made to have burnt him. Though the saint, like Daniel, be cast for his conscience into a den, there to fight with, and in danger to be devoured by, lion-like lusts, he can bring him out as safe and as whole as he was cast in. The goldsmith would not venture his gold in the fire if he knew it would be consumed by it. Man is no match for devils, but God over-matcheth them.

Preservation from sin these two ways, Augustine acknowledgeth with much affection. Lord, saith he, when I had a heart to sin, thou didst keep off the temptation, and when I had a temptation to sin, thou didst keep off my heart. If your hearts be as dry as tinder, he can hinder Satan from striking fire; if he suffer the tempter to strike fire, he can make the tinder wet, and hinder it

from taking. As he is able to defend you from what is hurtful, so to relieve you with what is needful; as the fire both purifieth the air, and warmeth them that sit about it.[1] He knoweth that ye are indigent, and have nothing of your own to live upon; but he can send you in such daily supplies as may afford you an honourable subsistence. I have read of one that feasted the vast army of Xerxes. God's estate is infinite, and therefore will bear a liberal provision for all his children. I know you desire proficiency of grace, and perfection in glory, above all the world. He can build you up in grace, he can cause all grace to abound. If this Sun draw nigh to you, the fruits of the spirit will ripen apace. This well of salvation can fill every vessel of your hearts, be they never so wide; he can make the babe of grace to grow till he become a young man, a strong man, and a father. If the nurse be taken from the child, and the breasts be denied it, of which it used to suck with so much delight, he can make it thrive as well with the spoon: in the want of pure public ordinances, he can be a little sanctuary to his saints. He often sendeth them a warm bit up to their chambers when they cannot come down and feed with the rest of the family. He can give you an inheritance that fades not away; he can conduct you through all your hardships, and crown you at last with heaven, where ye shall be kept both from sin and suffering, and freed, not only from foils, but also from fighting; where the love of God shall never be questioned, nor his providence quarrelled; where ye shall never offend others with your purity, nor have cause to defend yourselves from their injuries; 'where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away; where persecutors cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;' where your names shall be fully vindicated, your infirmities be wholly banished, your graces be perfected, and your souls infinitely blessed, being locked up in the bosom of Christ, and lodged in the embraces of God for ever and ever.

2. He is the most loving friend. Some have power to do their neighbours a courtesy, but tell us they owe them not so much goodwill. God, as he hath power enough to enable him, so he hath love enough to move him to do his people good. Jonathan ventured far for David's safety, and the reason was, for he loved him as his own soul. They who have God's heart, are sure of his helping hand. He chooseth his love, and then loves his choice;

[1] Si esuris, panis tibi est; si sitis, aqua tibi est; si in tenebris, lumen est, &c.—*Aug. Tract. in Johan.*

he had precious thoughts of them before they had any thoughts of themselves.

God loves his people, as they are his eternal choice: the mother loves the child whom she carried nine months in her womb. Oh how, then, doth God love his people, whom he carried in the womb of his purpose from all eternity! He loves them, as they are his own picture, as they are like him in grace and holiness. Men have loved others the more for resembling them in sin; so did Heliogabalus his children. God loves his children the more for resembling him in sanctity. Grace is lovely; God cannot but love his saints, because he loves himself. He loves them as they are his Son's purchase. They which were so dearly bought, are not easily loathed. Jacob was exceeding tender of Benjamin, though he could, as occasion required, expose the ten patriarchs to all weathers; yet by his good-will the wind must not blow upon Benjamin: if Benjamin miscarry, he dieth with him. And what is the reason of this extraordinary affection?—possibly this, Benjamin was the child of his beloved Rachel; Benjamin was dearly bought, he cost the life of his dear wife. So God loves his saints with a singular love, because they are the children of his dear Son, the travail of his soul. His beloved Son had many a sharp throe, and many a bitter pang, before he could bring them forth; nay, they cost him his very life.

He loves them above all the world besides. All others are dross; they are his gold. This whole world was set up as a tent for them to lodge in for the time of their pilgrimage; and when they shall be removed to their Father's house, this tent will presently be taken down. If all the wheat were but gathered into the heavenly garner, the chaff would not be an hour out of the unquenchable fire. He loves them as his own Son, John xvii. 26, 27. Who can tell the love God bears to his Son? The same love he bears to his saints. His name is love, his nature is love, his Son is the token of his love, his Spirit is the earnest of his love, the gospel his love-letter.

Hence it is that they are so happy who are committed to God's keeping, because he is so loving a guardian.

All the while that his people suffer, he doth sympathise, and he will support them. As a tender father he proportions the burden to the strength of his children's back. He doth like a lutanist, to use Chrysostom's similitude, who will not let the strings of his instrument be too slack, lest they mar the music, nor suffer them to be too hard screwed up, lest they break. He who taught the

husbandman to use several instruments for the threshing of several sorts of grain, and not to turn the cart-wheel about upon the cummin, Isa. xxviii. 25, will certainly himself not suffer his people to be afflicted above what they are able, 1 Cor. x. 13.

His love will set all his other attributes at work for his people's good. His wisdom will contrive, his power will act, and his faithfulness will perform whatsoever he promiseth for the comfort of his church, and all because he loveth them. What would not David have done for Absalom, whom he affecteth so dearly? When Absalom rebelled against him and sought his life, his heart relented towards Absalom out of love. What a charge doth he give his captains concerning him!—'Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.' What will not God do for his chosen whom he loveth? When they wander and run from him, he followeth after and wooeth them. 'For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart.' Mark, here is a child in a great crime; his father corrects him, and instead of kissing the rod, he kicks at the hand that holds it—'He went on frowardly in the way of his own heart.' Well, what is the fruit of this frowardness? You might expect greater severity upon such contumacy. Surely, if few stripes will do no good, many must be laid on; or if the rod will not do, the axe might be used. But, lo, what love doth! 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners,' Isa. lvii. 17–19. Well, though he be undutiful, yet he is my child; I will throw away my rods, and draw him with the cords of love; though he freeze under the nipping frosts, yet he will thaw under my warm beams.

3. He is the most faithful friend. He is constant in his love. Some are able, and loving also for a time; but their love, like a candle, though it burn a little in a close room and calm weather, is easily blown out by a stormy wind. If a Christian be called to the cross, he is, like the deer that is shot, by the herd pushed out of their company; but God is a lasting, yea, an everlasting friend. His love, like the sun, can never be abated, much less extinguished, by the greatest tempest, but is always going forth in its full strength. 'A brother is born for adversity; a friend loveth at all times,' Prov. xvii. 17. Such a friend is God, who, when few men will, never fails to appear for his suffering servants, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. Basil ventured very far for a persecuted friend; and being blamed for it, answered, *Ego aliter amare non didici*, I have

learned not to love otherwise. The ancients pictured friendship in the shape of a fair young man, bare-headed, with his breast open, meanly apparelled, with this inscription on his clothes: To live and to die with you; and this on his forehead, Summer and winter; and with this on his heart, *Propè*, *longè*, Far and near. God is such a friend as will never disown or deny his people. In the furnace the three children shall have his presence, wherever he is absent.

When men are mutable, and appear, as Tertullian saith of the peacock, all in changeable colours, use their friends as we do sun-dials, look no longer on them, nor regard them, than the sun shineth on them, 'God is a faithful creator,' 1 Pet. iv. 19; will be sure to mind the house that he hath built, and that most of all when it is out of repair and ready to fall. Bucholcerus, upon his friend's going to court to teach the Prince Elector's children, told him, I will give you one piece of counsel which may do you good whilst you live. His friend hearkened to him: I commend, saith he, to you the faith of devils; take heed whom you trust.

Indeed, there are many men like ponds, clear at the top, and mud at the bottom; fair in their tongues, but foul in their hearts. The greatest men's words are often like dead men's shoes, he may go barefoot that trusteth to them. But oh what a faithful friend is God, who never faileth his! He is such a physician as will be sure to visit his patients often when sick, although he may pass by their doors when they be well.

He is faithful to his promise; his word is the truth, Col. i. 5. His church is the pillar of truth, not to bear it up, but to hold it out, 1 Tim. iii; his sacraments the seals of truth; he himself is the Lord God of truth, Ps. xxxiv. 5. Who fears to be deceived when truth promiseth?[1] He keeps his promise to a word; 'Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that there hath not one good thing failed of all that the Lord promiseth,' Joshua xxiii. 14. The birth of the promise will answer their conception, and they bring forth in full feature and glory.

God is usually better, but never in the least worse, than his word. His promise is equivalent to possession. He keeps touch with his people in the time of performance to a day:[2] 'The self-same day Israel marched out of Egypt,' Exod. xii. 41. The four hundred and thirty years were that very day expired, nay, to a night: Dan. v.

[1] Quis falli timeat cum promittit veritas.—*Aug. Confes.*, lib xi. cap. 1.

[2] In sacra scriptura non solum bonitas est quod præcipitur, et fælicitas quod promittitur, sed etiam veritas quod dicitur.—*Hugo.*

30. 'In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.' When the big-bellied promise had gone its full time, the seventy years being then expired, it could not stay till morning for its delivery, but fell in labour that very night, and was safe delivered.

The promises are the flowers of which the cordial juleps are made which refresh you in fainting hours; but as God's love is the root upon which they grow, so his faithfulness is the hand that must bring them to you. It is your happiness that your riches lie in such good hands as God's, and that the public faith of heaven is engaged for the payment of all your bonds; for be confident, he who will not suffer a liar to enter heaven, will much less suffer a lie to enter his own heart: 'Faithful is he that hath promised, and also will do it,' 1 Thes. v. 24.

Thus, my dearly beloved, I commend you to the favour and affection, power and protection, care and benediction, of this God, who is so able, so loving, and so faithful a friend.

But as I desire, and shall endeavour by faith and prayer to commend you to God, so I cannot but hope, and I beg it of all amongst you that have any interest at the throne of grace, that ye would commend me to God: 'I beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,' Rom. xv. 30.

Before I conclude, as I have commended you to God, so let me commend you to, and commend to you, the word of his grace. Julius Cæsar being forced to swim for his life, held his commentary in one hand above water, and swam to land with the other. Without question you have more cause to value the word of God's grace. The law breatheth forth a cold blast, a north wind of threatenings, but the gospel sendeth forth a warm gale, a south wind of promises. Grace of all God's attributes must not be neglected; love can least endure to be slighted. Oh let me beseech you, for the Lord's sake, for your souls' sake, to value the gospel. Alas! what are we without it, but condemned malefactors, every moment liable to be called forth and hung up, as monuments of God's fury, in hell! If ever poor creature, in fear every moment of being fetched out of the prison and carried to the gallows, did esteem a pardon, sure I am ye have cause to prize the gospel. O sirs, how had all of us at this day been shut up under the law's curse, in the dungeon of endless wrath and misery, had not the gospel opened the prison doors, knocked off our shackles, and set our souls at liberty!

I commend the word of his grace to you under a fourfold consideration.

First, To purify your affections. I know ye want grace; now the word of grace can beget grace, and increase grace. It is the usual pipe through which grace may be conveyed into the vessels of your hearts. The laws of men may reform your actions, but it is the gospel of God which can renew your affections. Some poets speak of musicians that by the force of their music can make stones leap into walls, and tame beasts, be they never so savage. The word of God's grace will do much more, it will turn stones into children of Abraham; it will change a heart of stone into a heart of flesh; it will tame lions, and turn them into lambs, Isa. xi. 4–6. It hath made the very hearts of them to bleed, whose hands were imbrued in the blood of the Redeemer.

Let your endeavour be, that this word of grace may come with power to your souls, that you may not only hear it, but savour it; and not only read it, but relish it. Oh, my friends, the lack of this is the undoing of thousands! What is the reason that some who seemed very fair for heaven, fall away foully, and, as some mariners boast, can sail with all winds, to what haven soever they blow? Truly this, the gospel, though sometimes it conquered their outworks, never surprised the royal fort of their hearts; though it darted in some light, yet it was never received in the love of it. Oh, therefore, let me beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain, 2 Cor. vi. 1. Ah, how sad will it be for you if your hearts be like rocks, on which the dews of grace falling make no impression. As the apricot tree leaneth on the wall, but is rooted in the earth, so many seem to lean on Christ, but are rooted in their lusts: the word of grace abused is the condemnation. If grace be your enemy, ye have no friend in heaven or earth. The fruits of no trees ripen so fast, the sins of no men grow so great, as of them that stand constantly in the sunshine of the gospel. If the gospel be not a morning star to you, a forerunner of an eternal day, by ushering in the sun of righteousness upon you, it will be an evening star to you, bringing on you an everlasting night of death and darkness. As the ocean landeth some vessels safely at their happy ports, when it sinketh others, so the word of God's grace will either be a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death.

Secondly, To be the rule of your conversations. Your whole race must be regular, and there is no such rule to walk or work by as the word of his grace: 'As many as walk according to this rule,'

Gal. vi. 16; that is, according to the gospel. It containeth not only promises for your consolation, but also precepts for your conversations; therefore it is called a royal law, James ii. 8. A law, because it is to be the canon of our lives. The law delivered on mount Sinai is by Christ adopted into the family of the gospel. A royal law, because given us by God, the king of the world, who hath sovereignty and dominion over all, and therefore power to command what he pleaseth. The word of his grace is a royal law, because the king's highway, out of which road none may wander under the penalty of rebellion. Indeed, the gospel is a law of liberty, but not a law of licentiousness, James i. 25. It freeth us from the curse, but not from the commands, of the law. A true Christian is not *ἄνομος*, without law, but *ἔννομος*, under the law to Christ, 1 Cor. ix. 21. Look therefore to this royal law; expound it, and comment on it in your lives.

Let it be your rule for faith. The gospel is the only creed; he that believeth this is a true believer. As the Word, Christ, is the personal foundation, so the word of Christ is the doctrinal foundation for every Christian to build on, Eph. ii. 19, 20. This we believe, saith Tertullian, when we first believe that we ought to believe nothing beyond the Scriptures. Paul proves himself a true believer, because he believed all things written in the law and prophets, Acts xxiv. 14.

Make it your rule for worship. To serve God according to your own inventions, or men's prescriptions, is rebellion and disservice. As the moth eats out the garment, and the rust the iron, so doth an apocryphal worship in time eat out an evangelical worship, Mat. xv. 7. All worship of God, without warrant, is like private coining money, high treason against the King of heaven. God, though men durst not, charged Jeroboam with this crime: 'He offered upon the altar which he had made, in the month which he had devised of his own heart,' 1 Kings xii. 33. He took liberty to worship, when and where he pleased, not when and where God pleased. Till man can be his own maker, he may not be his own lawgiver. While his dependence is on God, God expecteth observance from him. The gospel is not only a royal law, but a perfect law, James i. 25. It needs not additions or traditions from men to supply its defects. It is horrid blasphemy to accuse Scripture of deficiency. Christ Jesus was faithful in all his house, which he had not been, if the laws he left us were not sufficient for God's service. Those that add to his word, tell us, though not plainly, yet interpretatively, that he was an unfaithful prophet. Friends, I beseech you keep

close to this rule. It will be a good antidote against the infections of the Papists; when the shops are full of adulterate ware, men that would not be cheated will bring what they buy to the light: 'To the law and to the testimony,' Isa. viii. 20.

In all things live by the gospel, and look to the gospel; let that be a light to your feet, and a lantern to your paths; keep the word, and it will keep you, in an hour of temptation from sinning, and in an hour of dissolution from sinking. The lawyer, in his doubts, consults with his Lyttleton or Coke; the physician prescribes by Galen or Hippocrates; the philosopher takes advice of his Aristotle; but the godly man must always take counsel of the gospel: Prov. iv. 26, 27, 'Ponder the paths of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left, remove thy feet from evil.'

Darius would be advised by his Zophyrus, and Scipio would do nothing without his Polybius. Let the law of God be your counsellor, the man of your counsel, as David made it; fear everything which God's law doth not allow.

The hen doth not only fear the ravenous fowls, but runneth away if she see so much as their shadow. Turn not in the least away from God's law, but hate the appearance, and shun the occasion, of evil. Many will labour to keep their credits, and to save their purses; do you labour to keep your consciences, and to save your piety and your souls.

Thirdly, To be your buckler against opposition. The gospel is a magazine, out of which Christians may be furnished with spiritual weapons in their holy war against the kingdom of darkness. Other armour, as of parts and gifts, morality and examples, is, as Alexander said of the Persians, when he saw them come into the field so richly clothed to fight with the Grecians, rather a prey to the enemy than a defence to the soldiers that wear it.[1] It is the word which is a shield against evil principles, Mat. xxii. 29; it may fitly be called, as Augustine sometime was, *Hæreticorum malleus*, the hammer of heresy. He that is mighty in Scripture, is the man that can hit this unclean bird in the eye, and wound it mortally with one blow, Acts xviii. 28. Even women, that are the weaker sex, with this sword in their hands, having learned from the Spirit how to use it, have encountered with great doctors, disarmed them of all their philosophical weapons, and shamefully foiled them. A friar being angry at Luther for spoiling their market, said, that had it not been for Luther, they could have per-

[1] Liv., lib. ix.

suaded the Germans to have eaten. Lay aside Scripture, and seducers shall prevail with you to eat poison.

It is a shield against evil practices: Ps. cxix. 9, 'By what means may a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to the word.' It must be a strong curb which can rein in a young man, who is hot and heady, when he is galloping with full career in the road of sin and hell; but the gospel can do it. When a sprightful young man, which is tasting and taking his carnal pleasures, which his youth will help him to savour above others, let but the gospel spread a table before him of his dainties, and let him but feed thereon, and his mouth will be ever after out of relish with all the coarse food and homely fare of this world.

Doth Satan assault you? Eph. vi. 17; use the gospel for your defence. It is not the sign of the cross, but the word of the cross, which Satan feareth; the gospel, like mustard seed, which, Pliny saith, mixed with vinegar, is sovereign against the poison of serpents.

As fencers play sometimes and fight with low weapons, merely to teach their scholars how to use them, so the blessed Saviour, though he could with his deity have driven away the devil, yet fighteth against him with the word, Rev. xii. 11, to shew us the virtue of, and how we should handle that weapon, Mat. iv. 4, 7, 10.

Is the world to you a place of thorns and briars? 2 Cor. x. 4; get your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and ye may walk comfortably through it. The Irish, some say, tread so lightly on the ground, that they run over bogs in which others stick and sink to their ruin. Though many perish in the world's sloughs and quagmires, yet they that have the gospel shoe on are sure to be safe.

Would it allure you with prosperity to profaneness? this indeed is a most dangerous bait. Adam was conquered in paradise, when Job was conqueror on the dunghill. Whilst the oyster is tossed by the crab, she so claspeth her shell, that she is in little danger of being devoured; but when, without fear, she layeth herself open to the sun, then comes her enemy, and thrusting in a stone to keep her open, with his claws picks her out. But the gospel will yield you a Pisgah sight of Palestine; and what a poor nothing is this whole world in his eyes who is able to look into the other world! He who beheld the recompense of reward, scorned the dignity of being son to Pharaoh's daughter, and, according to

some of the Jewish Rabbis, trampled the crown she put upon his head under his feet.

Would it affright you with adversity from piety? The gospel will shew you that the cross is the path to the crown, and as long as the traveller to a glorious kingdom is in the right way, though it be dirty, he is contented. Christ went to Jerusalem, the vision of peace, by Bethany, the house of grief. *Omnis Christianus crucianus*, saith Luther; Every saint must be a sufferer.

I hope ye will be willing to go to heaven in the same way which Christ and the noble army of saints have all marched in. Besides, the gospel will hold up your heads above these billows, by discovering the gain you shall get by afflictions. Christians, like some other creatures, see best in the night of sorrow and distress. The diamond of their graces sparkle gloriously at the bottom of those waters. When the wind is down, the chaff remains with the wheat; but when it riseth, it bloweth the chaff away.

The word of his grace will assure you of divine supplies suitable to your sufferings; that God, like an indulgent mother, will be sure to tend his sick children, though he leave others to the servants. When Christ had caused Jacob to halt, then the place was turned into a Peniel. Believe me, there is no such joy in the world as the people of God have under the cross, saith Philpot. Israel never saw so much of God as in the wilderness,—then manna from heaven, then the pillar goeth before them, and the rock followed after them.

Fourthly, To be your cordial in all afflictions. The ram's skin covered the ark from the injury of wind and weather, which typified the defence the church hath by the gospel from those miseries to which she is liable on earth. This is my comfort, saith David, in my afflictions, thy word hath quickened me. When the weight of his afflictions was ready to sink him, the gospel, like blown bladders, preserve him from sinking.

Some, I remember, expound that place, 'Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful shower, whereby thou didst refresh thine heritage when it was weary,' Ps. lxviii. 9. The law was rained down with those heavenly oracles on mount Sinai; while the thunder affrighted the people, the law refreshed them. If the law did revive them in that terrible tempest, what will the gospel do? If his precepts are sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb, how sweet are his promises! If his statutes are the saint's songs, surely the word of his grace is his triumph.

Seneca, going about to comfort his friend Polybius, persuades

him to bear his affliction patiently, because he was Cæsar's favourite. The word of grace affords you infinitely richer cordials, exceeding rich and precious promises, wherein ye are admitted to be the friends of God, the members of Christ, the temples of the Spirit, and the heirs of heaven. The feather of the promise hath dropped in some comfort into a broken heart, when it hath been ready to die with despair, and could take nothing down: 'That ye through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.'

This life would be little better than hell, saith Bernard, were it not for the hope of heaven; but the hope of your future happiness, which is discovered in the gospel, may, like cork to the line, keep your hearts aloft all waters and afflictions.

Now ye have a storm, but hereafter an everlasting calm; now ye are tossed to and fro, and weather-beaten; but faith, by the prospective glass of the gospel, discovers land, and this, without question, may support your spirits.

Therefore, when trouble comes, take heed of fetching your comfort from any creature. Alas! they are all puddle water. It is the word of grace which is the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, the river whose streams make glad the city of God.

Thus I commend you to the word of his grace in this fourfold respect.

To conclude all, it is reported of a friend of Cyrus, that, being asked where his treasure was, he answered, *Ὅπου Κύρος φιλὸς*, Where Cyrus is my friend. I hope, if any ask you where your treasure, your riches, your honour, your happiness is, ye will say, *Ὅπου Κὺριος φιλὸς*, Where God is our friend. Now to this God, according to my power, I have, I do, and I shall commend you, to his favour and singular affection, to his power and special protection, and to his care and universal benediction.

I cannot commend you to one so faithful; though others fall off like leaves in autumn, he will never leave you that are his, nor forsake you. I know not to commend you to one so loving; he lived in love, he in our natures died for love. His love is like himself, boundless and bottomless. It is impossible to commend you to one so able; he can supply all your needs, fill all your souls to the brim; grace is lovely in your eyes, whoever beheld it. Glory is infinitely amiable in your judgments, whoever believed it. He can build you up, and give you an inheritance, where all the heirs are kings and queens, and shall sit on thrones, and live and reign with Christ for ever and ever. There ye shall have robes of purity on your backs, palms of victory in your hands, crowns of glory on

your heads, and songs of triumph in your mouths; there ye may meet together to worship him without fear, and drink freely of his sweetest, dearest favour; there your services will be without the smallest sin, and your souls without the least sorrow. If pastor and people meet there, they shall never part more. It is some comfort now, that though distant in places, we can meet together at the throne of grace; but oh, what a comfort will it be to meet together in that palace of glory! But since we must part here, 'finally, my brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind; live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.' 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified.'

THE GODS ARE MEN.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Worshipful JOHN BERESFORD, Esq., High Sheriff of the County of Hertford.

HONOURED SIR,—It is reported of Queen Elizabeth,[1] that Deborah of our nation, that in a letter to the king of France she should use this expression, That if there were any unpardonable sin, it must be ingratitude. And Plutarch relateth,[2] concerning Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, that he took the death of Æropus very impatiently, because he was thereby cut off from all opportunities of requiting the courtesies which he had received from him. I think, sir, there are few that have any relation to me, but know something of my obligations to you. And though I cannot strictly comply with the former, yet I bless God I have not the same cause to complain with the latter. Notwithstanding, the only requital I am able to make you, is by these lines to give you a bill under my hand that I am your debtor. I shall ever hold myself engaged to remember the frequent and real kindness which your liberal self and loving consort have freely bestowed on me and mine;[3] for which I may say to you, as Furnius to Augustus, *Hanc unam Cæsar habeo injuriam tuam, effecisti ut viverem et morerer ingratus*,[4] This is the only injury you have done me by your courtesies, to force me to live and die ungrateful.

Your voluntary closing with them in the parish that seek to advance the power of godliness, your honouring them that fear the Lord, your disesteeming vicious persons, your charitable contributions to the poor upon all occasions, are certainly recorded in heaven; and therefore, for the honour of God and encouragement of others, deserve respectfully to be mentioned on earth. In testimony of my

[1] Camb. Eliz. [2] Plut. in Vitæ Pyrr.

[3] Ingratus est qui beneficium accepisse se negat, quod accepit; ingratus qui dissimulat; ingratus qui non reddit; ingratissimus omnium qui oblitus est.—*Sen. de Benef.*, lib. iii. cap. 1. [4] *Idem*, lib. ii. cap. 25.

gratitude I now present to your eyes, what was lately preached in your ears, with the addition of some things then omitted, either through the defect of my memory, or want of time. Acknowledging both the weight of the matter delivered, and my weakness in the manner of its delivery, it is very visible that this child is like its parent, I mean my book, if these sheets may be called by that name, too too much resembleth my body in infirmities. And indeed the consciousness of my own inabilities hath been the chief reason why I have not yet satisfied the desires of some persons of quality in publishing two former sermons composed on the like occasion. Only my respect to you hath caused this sermon, like Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 36, to supplant its elder brother[1] by getting away the birthright, and like Pharez, Gen. xxxviii. 29, to make a breach upon his brother Zarah, and get into the world before him. But the Almighty God, who is a free agent, often worketh great things by small means. He can, by the blowing of rams' horns, cause the strong walls of Jericho to fall down, Joshua vi. 16; with common clay he can make a precious salve to open the eyes of the blind, John ix. 6. It pleaseth his wisdom, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe, 1 Cor. i. 21. Herein the sovereignty of the gospel is most excellently set forth, in that it leadeth the soul by the hand of a child, Isa. xi. 6, and is as truly, though not as abundantly, powerful, from young Timothy as from Paul the aged, 1 Tim. iv. 17.[2]

The favourable and extraordinary acceptance which this sermon obtained when it was heard, moveth me to hope that, through the blessing of heaven, it will be profitable when it shall be read.

Sir, in it you may discern that there will be an end of, and that there is an emptiness in, all earthly perfections, Ps. cxix. 96. That death is the great leveller, making all equal, seizing as boldly on, and dealing as hardly with, the greatest emperor as the poorest beggar.

'Divesne, prisco natus ab Inacho,
Nil interest, an pauper, et infima
De gente, sub dio moreris,
Victima nil miserantis orci,
Omnes eodem cogimur, omnium
Versatur urna: serius, ocyus
Sors exitura, nos in æternum
Exilium impositura cymbæ.
—*Hor.*, lib. ii. *Ad Del.*

[1] A sermon preached at a former assize on the former part of the text, not yet printed.

[2] Dr Reynold's epistle before Meditat. on Lord's Supper.

That the rich man's wealth, which is his strong city, Prov. x. 15, and a high tower in his conceit, cannot secure him against the assault and battery of this grand adversary; that the grave maketh no difference between the dust of princes and peasants;[1] that they which cannot be contented with much earth while they live, will be contained in a little when they die. As the Macedonian king, Philip, having got a fall in the sand, as he was wrestling at the Olympic games, when he rose again, seeing the print of his body in the sand, cried out, Oh how little a parcel of earth will hold us when we are dead, who ambitiously seek after the whole world whilst we are living! That image in Daniel, chap. ii. 32, doth notably set out the frailty of worldly greatness; the head of it was of fine gold—that spake the Chaldean empire; the breast and arms of silver—this that empire of the Medes and Persians; the belly and thighs of brass—by these the Grecian empire is understood; but the feet were part of clay. The feet of this image were the strength and foundation of the image, and speak thus much to us, that all worldly pomp and majesty will fail, all earthly power and dignity will fall, for the image stands upon clay. Cyrus, therefore, did fitly cause this epitaph to be engraven on his tomb, O man, whosoever thou art, that shalt come hither, know that I am great Cyrus, that first erected the Persian monarchy, therefore envy me not this little earth that now covereth my body.[2]

From it you may learn that your greatest care should be to fit yourself for your last hour; your main work is to do your last act well. The Roman gladiators appointed to death were very solicitous how they should contrive their bodies so as that they might fall handsomely, and die modestly. Your business is so to furnish your soul that you may die piously, to get such riches as will swim out with you in a shipwreck;[3] to be rich towards God, Luke xxii. 21; to be rich in faith, James ii. 5; to be rich in good works, 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. Alas! how poor is that man who hath no other riches than what are at the courtesy of the thief, moth, and death! Hereby you will lay up a good foundation against the time to come, and lay hold on eternal life.

It will shew you how absolutely necessary an experimental knowledge of a crucified Christ is to a dying Christian, that no weapon

[1] Their bones and skeletons have no inscriptions or titles of honour remaining on them.—*Vines Ess. Fun.*

[2] Q. Cur., Nudus pascit aves, jacet en qui possidet orbem, Exiguæ telluris inops.—*Claudian of Pomp. Mag.*

[3] Hujusmodi comparandæ sunt opes quæ simul cum naufragio enatent.

is more requisite for us to have and use, when we enter the lists, and encounter with our last enemy, than the shield of faith; oh how cheering and comforting to a dying body will the warm blood of the Lord Jesus be, being applied by a true lively faith to the soul! He, and he only, may look on the king of terrors without fear, that hath first looked on the King of saints with the eye of faith.

It will acquaint you that a saving work of grace must be wrought upon the heart before death can be a passage to the weight of glory.[1] That all the godliness of an unregenerate man will die with him. That the lamp of profession which shineth gloriously whilst a man liveth, if it be not fed from oil in the vessel, true grace in the heart, a renewed nature, the image of God stamped on the soul, it will go out in a stink when he dieth, and not advantage him at all. And therefore Christians should not, like some tradesmen, live altogether upon their credit with others, but labour to find some testimony within them, that there is a real change wrought upon them.

It will tell you, that it highly concerneth you to be laborious for your soul; for your Saviour now you live, because you must rest when you die. That you should be much in thinking highly of God, in speaking humbly to God, in acting vigorously for God. That you should abound more and more in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Saints must not, like Joshua's moon, stand still, Joshua x. 12, 13; much less, like crabs, go backward; no, not like the snail, creep forward; but, like the sun, rejoice to run his race. The path of the just must be like the shining light, that shineth brighter and brighter to perfect day, Prov. iv. 18.[2]

Truth of grace is ever followed with growth in grace; though perfection be the honour and reward only of the saints in heaven, yet it is the desire and endeavour of the saints on earth. That you should persevere and increase, both by your pattern and precept, in discouraging the bad, and encouraging the good. That you should improve all opportunities, employ every talent, your honour, riches, power, life, health, strength, relations, interests, all you have, are, or can be, to the utmost in his service, and for his glory, who, I hope, hath loved you, and washed you in his blood. Pharaoh would have active men to be his servants, Gen. xlvii. 6; the great King of

[1] A painter may paint fire, but he cannot paint heat. A person civilised may attain to the outward actions, but cannot to the inward affections, of a sanctified Christian.

[2] Falsi illi sunt, qui diversissimas res expectant, ignaviæ voluptatem, et præmia virtutis.—*Salust.* Non incepisse sed perfecisse virtutis est.—*Aug. ad fratr. in erem.*

heaven is a pure act, and he loveth most and liketh best those servants that are most active for him. Hereby you will please the most high God, though hereby you will displease profane men. The world, indeed, whom the Spirit of God compareth to dogs, 2 Pet. ii. 22, if a man go softly will be quiet; but if he ride apace in the way to heaven, they will bark exceedingly, yea, and bite if they can;[1] do but hinder their progress in sin, and, like waters stopped at a bridge, they will roar and make a noise to purpose. But surely the favour of God will build up the heart against all the anger of men. Those persons which the wicked besmear with calumny, and those actions which ungodly men speak of with scorn and contempt, God will entertain with an *Euge*, and reward with glory: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many cities, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' Mat. xxv. 21.

Sir, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Rickmersworth is, that it might be saved. And I hope the divine providence will ere long put a greater price into your hands than ever yet you had, wherein you may manifest your fear of his majesty, your zeal for his glory, your hatred of iniquity, and your real love to the place of your nativity; which, that you may faithfully discharge at this day, and comfortably account for at the last day, and that you and yours, when these earthly houses of your tabernacles shall be dissolved, may have a building of God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens, 2 Cor. v. 1, shall be the prayer of him whose desire is to be,

Your faithful servant in the work of your faith,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

RICKMERSWORTH, *June* 1, 1657.

[1] His speech savoured more of wit than grace, who counselled his friend not to come too nigh unto truth, lest his teeth should be beaten out with its heels.

THE GODS DIE LIKE MEN;

OR,

MAGISTRATES ARE MORTAL.

I have said, Ye are gods: and all of you are children of the Most High: but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7.

One of the fathers[1] resembleth the whole Bible to the visible heavens, wherein, saith he, the Psalms are like the sun, whose beams shine brightly, and rays warm comfortably. An English divine compareth all the Scriptures to the body of man, and the Psalms to the heart, the most pathetic part, the seat and centre of sweet affections.[2] Nay, as one observeth, the very Turks that disclaim both Old and New Testament in general, yet will swear as solemnly by the Psalms of David, as by the Alchoran of Mohammed. But what need have we of the testimony of men, when God is pleased to give such large witness in the Gospel to this book of Psalms, in which the Psalms are quoted above sixty times.[3] The apostle calleth them spiritual songs, Col. iii. 16, both because they were inspired by the holy Spirit of God, and because they are instrumental to spiritualise men's affections; and also because they do suit with men's spirits. They are so penned, that every man may think they speak *de se, in re sua*, of himself and to his own condition.

[1] Ambr. Offic. lib. i. cap. 32.

[2] Luther calleth them parva biblia, et summarium utriusque testamenti.

[3] Leigh's Hist. p. 35.

This eighty-second Psalm containeth a severe reprehension of superiors for their ungodly oppression of inferiors.[1]

The text presenteth you with their majesty and with their mortality. In ver. 6, 'They are gods: and children of the Most High:' there is their majesty. In ver. 7, 'They die like men, and fall like princes:' there is their mortality.

Plautus telleth us concerning Hercules, that he was the son of Jupiter, and so immortal; and the son of Amphitrion, and so mortal. The former verse speaketh that ye are the sons of God, thereby ye seem to be immortal; but the latter pronounceth plainly that ye shall die like men, and therefore it is apparent ye are mortal.

In ver. 6, ye are exalted as high as heaven; I have said, 'Ye are gods.' In the seventh verse, ye are debased as low as earth: 'But ye shall die.'

In ver. 6, How beautiful are your features! How angelical are your faces! Nay, how God-like are your looks! I have said, 'Ye are gods.' In the seventh, when the other side of the picture is turned, what hoary heads! what heavy hearts! what quivering lips! what trembling loins! what dying flesh! what decaying spirits have ye!

And it is not without cause that the Spirit of God subjoineth your humanity to your deity, your mortality to your majesty, as a means to prevent sin, and as a curb to restrain you from making your lust your law, or your will the rule of all your actions.[2]

In the words, we have the mortality of the magistrate, namely, from the seventh verse, first affirmed, 'Ye shall die like men.' Secondly amplified, 'and fall like the princes.' Thirdly confirmed, surely and certainly; as surely as ye live like gods, so surely ye shall die like men, *Certe sicut homo.* Calvin, Moller., Trem., *legunt.*

I have formerly in this place, upon the like occasion, from the sixth verse, discovered the dignity of magistracy.[3] I shall now proceed to the frailty of the magistrate. My work now will be like

[1] Quia reges et quicunque potestate præditi sunt, immensam sibi licentiam, fastu excœcati, ut plurimum indulgent: denunciat Propheta, reddendam esse rationem summo judici, qui omnem mundi celsitudinem supereminet.—*Calvin. argu.* Ps. lxxxii.

[2] Ut cæteri omnes natura sunt obnoxii morti, et quidem æternæ damnationi, si in delictis adversus conscientiam ad extremum usque perseverent: ita scitote vos quoque iisdem legibus subjectos esse.—*Moller. in loc.* Ea cogitatio de fragilitate vestra et de pœnis secuturis commonefacere et excitare vos debebat, ut in procuratione muneris vestri majore diligentia et studio versaremini.—*Idem ibid.*

[3] At an assize holden at Hertford, for that county, upon the 2d day of August 1653.

Philip's youth, to mind you that ye are but men. And I hope there is none here of the Persian monarch's humour, into whose presence none might come clothed with sackcloth, Esther iv. 2; nor like Lewis XI. of France, who would not permit the word death to be named in his court; for all the dish I have to entertain you with at this time is a death's head. Neither shall I garnish that with the flowers of human eloquence, as knowing there is no need of it. The deformed harlot wanteth colouring, but the virgin truth of God is most beautiful in her native dress; and there is little good by it. A painted window keepeth out the light; a painted fire will not burn; a painted sword will not cut; and if ever the fire of Scripture, Jer. xxiii. 29, warm the heart, Luke xxiv. 32; or this sword of the Spirit wound the conscience, Eph. vi. 17, to conviction and conversion, it must be drawn out of the gaudy scabbard of man's wisdom.

I shall first speak to the explication of the words, and then draw the observation from the words.

But, i.e., for all the glorious titles wherewith ye are invested as gods amongst men, and the administration of justice wherewith ye are intrusted as my lieutenants on earth; yet for all this, ye shall die;[1] though your names are divine, your natures are but human.

Surely, i.e., though ye should flatter yourselves because ye are gods, ye shall ever live; yet know certainly that ye are but men, and must die. All God's words are true and sure, but on some there is affixed a special note of certainty, because of man's, especially great persons', extraordinary infidelity. Though ye should neither regard it, nor provide for it, as if it were a thing of small consequence, or little concernment: 'Yet ye may say to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my brother and sister,' Job xvii. 14.

Ye shall die like men. Your souls and bodies that have been joined together like husband and wife, shall be parted asunder. Death will loose all bands, untie all knots, even this conjugal one, betwixt soul and body, which is the strongest of all.

Like men, i.e., like ordinary men;[2] like Adam, saith Ainsworth, Though in your lives ye are like Saul, higher by the head and shoulders than the people; yet in your deaths they and you meet, are equal.

Two things ye do as men:

[1] Ac si diceret, quum instructi sunt potestate ad regendum mundum, non exuisse tamen naturam ut mortales esse desinerent.—*Calv. in loc.*

[2] Sicut plebeius homo.—*Tremel.*

1. Ye sin as ye are men; 1 Cor. iii. 3,[1] to walk as a man is to walk carnally, to walk sinfully.

2. *Ye die as men;* Ps. ix. 20,[2] to know yourselves to be men is know yourselves to be mortal.

And fall like one of the princes. These words have a double lection, and fourfold construction.

We read them, 'And fall like one of the princes.'[3] Others read them, 'And ye princes shall fall like one.'

For their fourfold construction:

1. Some understand them of a fall into hell. So several of the ancients take them, like the prince of the devils. This is true of evil magistrates, death to them is but the trap-door to hell; the higher their exaltation is, the greater and lower their damnation will be. The words of the prophet are emphatical: 'Tophet is prepared of old; yea, for the king it is prepared,' Isa. xxx. 33.[4] The greater men's preferment is, the greater their defilement, and the greater their punishment.

2. Others understand them of a fall by a violent death; so many princes fall. In that bloody way, Saul, Abner, Ahab, and many other princes mentioned in Scripture, went to their long homes.[5] The Roman historian observeth, that the Cæsars got little by their places, *nisi ut citius interficerentur.* Some men's honour hath been the knife to cut their throats.

> Sæpius ventis agitatur ingens
> Pinus: et celsæ graviore casu
> Decidunt turres, feriuntque summos
> Fulmina montes.—*Horat. ad Licin.*

3. A third sort expound the words of falling as the princes of other nations.[6] Though ye are the princes of God's people, yet ye are not thereby privileged from the arrest of death. For as the sun of prosperity shineth as well on the briars in the wilderness as on the roses in the garden; so the frost of adversity falleth as well on the fruitful corn as on the hurtful weeds. The most notorious sinner liveth as well as the most gracious saint; and the most gracious saint dieth as well as the most notorious sinner. Grace

[1] Errare humanum est.

[2] Quod sint homines, *i. e.*, quod sint miseri, infirmi, mortales.—*Moller. in loc.*

[3] Et sicut quilibet principes cadetis.—*Calv.* Qui exquisitissimis tormentis cruciantur. Potentes potenter torquebuntur.

[4] Ingentia beneficia, ingentia flagitia, et ingentia supplicia.

[5] Kings, saith one, are fair marks for traitors to shoot at.—*Trapp on* Esther ii.

[6] Deodati *in loc.*

is an antidote against the poison of death, but not a preservative from undergoing death.

4. The words are construed thus: Like the princes that have been before you. Ye know that your ancestors, who were as high in honour, and as great in power, as yourselves, yet submitted to death; so must ye do as they have done. *Etiam muta clamant cadavera;* their graves amongst you do read a lecture of mortality to you.

The term whereby the Spirit of God describeth death is considerable. It is called a fall: 'And fall like one of the princes.'

Sin is called a fall, and so is death, Rom. xiv. 13. Death is the first-born of sin, and therefore no wonder if the child be called after the name of its parent.

Death is to every man a fall, from everything but God and godliness. Ye that are magistrates fall more stairs, yea, more storeys, than others. The higher your standing while ye live, the lower your falling when ye die.

Death to some is a fall from earth to hell; to all, from the society of men to the company of worms. To you that are great men, it will be a fall from your richest treasures, from your delightful pleasures, from your stateliest possessions, from your loveliest relations, from whatsoever is called the good of this world: 'Your eyes shall no more see good,' Job vii. 7.

> 'Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens
> Uxor: neque harum, quas colis, arborum
> Te præter invisas cupressos
> Ulla brevem dominum sequetur.'—*Hor. ad Posth.*

Death is called an unclothing, 2 Cor. v. 4, because it will strip you of all your places of honour, of all the ornaments of nature. As ye came naked into the world, so ye must go naked out of the world, Job. i. 21. Nothing will follow you when ye die but your works, Rev. xiv. 13. When the good magistrate dieth, that hath been zealous for the Lord's honour, and studious of his soul's welfare, his works follow him, through free grace, into an eternal weight of glory. When the evil magistrate dieth, who hath been careless of his conscience, and unfaithful in his calling, his works follow him, through divine severity, into a boundless ocean of endless misery.

After this brief explication of the words, I proceed to the doctrinal observation:

That magistrates are mortal, or they who live like gods must die

like men. The most potent emperor must take his leave of this life, as well as the poorest beggar.

Death is called 'the way of all the earth,' Joshua xxiii. 14, because all flesh on earth go this way. It is the greatest road in the world; never without many travellers of all sorts, ranks, and degrees. The grave is the inn or resting-place whither this way tendeth; and Job telleth us, chap. iii. 19, that 'the small and the great are there.'

The mortal scythe of death is master of the royal sceptre, and moweth down as well the lilies of the crown as the grass of the field: Isa. xl. 6, 7, 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth.'[1]

As Athanasius speaketh of Julian, so I may say of the greatest king in the world, *Nubecula est, quæ cito transibit.*

Do we not find by experience that the greater candles consume and burn out as well as the lesser; and that the boisterous wind of sickness bloweth down and rooteth up as well the tall cedars of Lebanon, and the strong oaks of Bashan, as the lower shrubs and weaker trees of the valleys.

We ministers that preach the word of life, must ere long submit to death; ye have the heavenly treasure in earthen vessels, 2 Cor. iv. 7. And you magistrates, that are the bulwarks of the country, under God, to preserve us from the shot of a violent death, must necessarily yourselves undergo a natural death. Ye are called the shields of the earth, Ps. xlvii. 9; yet ye are but earthen shields.[2] Ye are called the shepherds of the people, Isa. xliv. 28; but this wolf of death will seize as well on the shepherd as on the sheep.[3]

I shall not stand to prove it any further at this present; there is not one of you, either judge or justices, that hear me this day, but within a few days shall be the proof of the text.

I shall only give you the causes of the doctrine, and then make some use of it.

But why do the gods die like men?

There are three causes of it, as they are men.

First, The moral or meritorious cause of death is sin. Sin and

[1] At one end of the library in Dublin was a globe, at the other end a skeleton, to shew that though man were lord of all the world, yet he must die.

[2] Scuta terræ sunt terrea scuta.

[3] As at a game at chess, when done, not only pawns, but kings, queens, and knights are tumbled into the bag, so, when the race of life is finished, noble as well as ignoble are tumbled into their graves.

death, like Jacob and Esau, were brought forth at one birth; they were twins, and came into the world together. As the thread followeth the needle, so death followeth sin: 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,' Rom. v. 12, and vi. 23.

A worthy divine of our own doth solidly though briefly state that question, viz., Whether man had not died, if he had not sinned;[1] or whether death be natural or accidental: and doth evidently prove that man's life should have lasted as long as his obedience; that man had never fallen into his grave if he had never fallen into transgression. He died, not because his nature was subject to corruption, but because sin had corrupted his nature. If he had not turned from God, he had not returned to dust. Man was wholly a stranger to death till acquainted with sin. If he had continued in a state of innocency, he had continued in a state of immortality.

Though Adam died not actually as soon as he fell, yet he presently became mortal, and liable to death; for immediately upon his fall, sentence was passed upon him: Gen. iii. 19, 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return;' according to that law, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' Gen. ii. 17.[2] As the malefactor is a dead man in law when the sentence is pronounced upon him, though there be some time between his condemnation and execution, so was man dead both in the decree and threatening of God when the sentence of death was denounced against him, though there was some respite between it and his actual dissolution.

Now magistrates sin, therefore must die.[3] If you perform but that duty, of much difficulty, yet of absolute necessity, of communing with your own hearts, and looking sometimes back upon your lives, without question you will find, beside your original depravation, a numberless number of actual provocations. I be-

[1] Stipendium peccati mors.

[2] Some say the Pope hath a book called 'Taxa Cameræ Apostolicæ,' shewing the rate of every sin; at what rate one may be drunk, or swear, or keep a whore.

[3] This word death, alone implieth at what rate man may sin. Death temporal, which is the separation of body and soul; death spiritual, which is the separation of God and the soul in part, and for a time; eternal, which is everlasting and total perdition from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, are the rate of sin, and the sad fruits that grow on this root of bitterness. Sin is the father of death; but death, like Sennacherib's issue, will at last destroy its parent. Sin in the body is like the leprosy in the house, which will not out till it be pulled down; but when the body of the saint shall be dissolved, that body of death shall be wholly destroyed.

lieve the best of you are too like the Egyptian temple, without fair and beautiful, but within full of serpents and crocodiles. Your lives possibly may be unblamable as to the eye of man, but are there not seven abominations in your hearts?

The second cause of death is the corruptibility of magistrates' bodies. This is the natural cause; your bodies are corruptible. It is now common to all creatures mixed of elements, to be resolved into that out of which they were made. Contrary qualities will for a time contend, and at last destroy each other.[1] In the third of Genesis, ver. 19, we read man's exodus, viz., that he was dust in regard of his original production, and shall be dust in regard of his ultimate resolution.

As the finest garment breedeth a moth, and that moth eateth up the garment; as the strongest tree breedeth a worm, and that worm devoureth the tree; so the fairest and strongest bodies breed such diseases as will at last consume them.[2]

Eliphaz, speaking of the highest men, assureth us that their foundation is in the dust, Job iv. 19. Now the stability of a building dependeth on the strength of its foundation. The church is therefore immoveable, because Christ, her foundation, is invincible, Mat. xvi. 18; but our natural foundation being in the dust, we cannot hold out long. The house of man's body is walled and roofed with earth, and founded upon no better than dust. The bodies of magistrates have the same foundation. The psalmist, speaking of a prince, saith that he returneth to his earth, Ps. cxlvi. 4; as if his body could challenge no alliance to, or propriety in, anything but earth. It is his earth. Alexander the Great being wounded at the siege of an Indian city, said, I have been told I am the son of God; but I see now I am liable to wounds and death as well as others.[3]

3. The supernatural cause of death is the appointment of heaven: 'It is appointed for all men once to die,' Heb. ix. 27.

Some men, yea, most in the world, die twice; the second death hath power over them; but all must die once. The exception of one or two that were translated, and of them that shall be found alive at the coming of Christ, will not make void this general rule.[4]

Magistrates that execute the statute law of men, die by a standing

[1] Contraria inter se pugnant, et mutuo se destruunt.

[2] Physicians have a rule, *Ultimus sanitatis gradus, est morbo proximus.*

[3] Q. Cur. and Plut. in Vit.

[4] The greatest landlords are but tenants at God's will in these houses of clay.

law of God. When God is pleased to give sickness a warrant under the great seal of heaven, it quickly executeth its office, and turneth men into earth. It is thus ordered in God's high court, that judges and justices who now sit on the bench, shall die and appear at his bar. The Turkish historian observeth, that when the great Bashas are feasting, oftentimes there cometh a messenger by order from the great sultan, and casteth a black mantle over them, and they are presently forced to submit to strangling. So the proudest potentates, in the midst of their mirth, are often surprised by a sudden distemper, commissionated by God, and sent to their long homes.

I shall now draw some inferences from the doctrine.

First, If magistrates are mortal, observe hence death's prevalency and power above all the privileges and prerogatives of nature. It is a memorable speech of Sir Walter Raleigh,[1] Though God, who loveth men, is not regarded, yet death, which hateth men, is quickly obeyed. O mighty death! O eloquent death! whom no man could advise or persuade, thou canst prevail with. Take notice from hence, that nothing in this world can privilege a man against the arrest of death.

First, Strength cannot. All the strength and power which the gods have cannot free them from death. Magistrates have civil strength as they are magistrates; the command of whole counties, kingdoms, yea, empires. In this respect it is that magistrates are called principalities and powers, Titus iii. 1; yet death hath power over them that have power over others. Alexander and Cæsar, that conquered countries and kingdoms, were conquered by death. Magistrates have natural strength as they are men, but death trippeth up the heels and layeth on their backs the most strong and valiant. 'One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet: his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow,' Job xxi. 23, 24.[2]

Put the case that a man be in the zenith and height of his estate, when his health is most pure, and his strength is most perfect; when he hath the choicest complexion in his face, and fondest constitution in his body; when there is most agility in his joints, and most appetite in his stomach; yet even then sickness arresteth him at the suit of death, haleth his body to the prison of the grave, and sendeth his soul to his own place. Man at his best estate, yea,

[1] Lib. v. in conclusion of cap. *ult.*

[2] Plato saith that marrow is not only the source of generation, but the seat of life.

'Surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity,' Ps. xxxix. 5.

Secondly, As the strength, so the wealth of magistrates is insufficient. The Holy Ghost telleth us, that the rich man also died, Luke xvi. 22. Men may put riches into the grave with them, but they will not keep them one moment out of the grave. Death, like jealousy, will not regard any ransom, nor be content though men would give many gifts.[1] Job speaketh, supposing that he had died, 'Then I had been at rest with princes that had gold, and filled their houses with silver.' It is reported of Cardinal Beaufort, that when on his death-bed, he should say, Fie, will not death be hired? will money do nothing? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able, either by wealth to buy it, or by wit to procure it. But it could not help him; die he did. Money is the monarch of this world, but not of the next; it can neither stave off sickness, nor buy out death.

Thirdly, As neither strength nor wealth, so neither can the honours of men help them against this last enemy. How have the highest men on earth been laid as low as the earth by it? 'Man in honour doth not abide,' Ps. xlix. 12. His duration is sometimes the less, because his reputation is so great.

Job speaketh excellently, 'Where is the dwelling-place of princes? who shall declare his way to his face?' Job xxi. 28, 31. This person is so high that none dareth tell him of his wicked practices. Kings, saith one, have clouds in their brows as well as crowns on their heads; they would be adored like gods, and not reproved like men.[2] Yet these men, which are so high that none must speak to them, death will be sure to speak with them: 'Yet he shall be brought to the grave, and remain among the tombs,' ver. 32. There is much weight in that word; yet, *i.e.*, though he be a prince, so proud that he scorneth to hear men's reproofs, yet he shall be forced to listen to death's language; though his dwelling-place was stately amongst men, yet he shall be brought to a homely one amongst worms: 'Yet he shall be brought to his grave, and remain amongst the tombs.' It was a notable speech of the king of Persia, who, visiting Constantine at Rome, was shown the rare edifices, rich coffers, and great honours of the emperor, *Mira quidem hæc, sed video, ut in Persia, sic Romæ, homines moriuntur.*[3]

[1] The Irish have a proverb, What aileth a rich man to die?

[2] Luther complaineth that in his time magistrates *Elati superbia volebant esse ipso verbo superiores.*

[3] When Michael Palæologus, emperor of Constantinople, sent for a present to

If magistrates are mortal, how much folly is in him that laboureth most for his body? The truth is, there is a secret conceit in the hearts of great persons who have the world at will, that they shall not die; it is not *vox oris*, but it is *vox cordis;* they still think of a longer life, though they have lived never so long. They can see death in other men's brows, but not in their own bosoms: 'Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations,' Ps. xlix. 11.[1] Hence it cometh to pass that they work altogether for this world; so they have earth in their hands, they care not though they have nothing of heaven in their hearts. Their endeavour is to live in the favour of great men, and not to die in the fear of the great God.

How many great persons spend their time, as Seneca speaketh, *inter pectinem et speculum occupati*, between the comb and the glass, and not between Scripture and prayer. Their labour is to go finely, to fare deliciously, to live honourably, to prosper outwardly; but not to honour God fruitfully, to discharge that trust which is committed to them faithfully, or to work out their own salvation diligently.

There is a story of a fat man riding through Rome on a lean horse. It was demanded how it came to pass that he, being so exceeding fat, his horse was so lean? He answereth, *Ego meipsum, stabularius equum curat*, I mind myself, but my groom looketh after my horse. Too many, God knoweth, have fat bodies and lean souls—their outward man is flourishing, their inward man is perishing; and the reason is, they themselves regard their bodies, but they say they trust God, or more truly the devil, with their souls.

Prince Absalom is a fit resemblance of such persons; whilst he lived he provided somewhat against the time he must die; but what doth he provide? only a place for his body to rest in. The Spirit of God takes special notice how provident this ambitious youngster was for his body: 'Now Absalom in his lifetime had reared up for himself a pillar,' 2 Sam. xviii. 18. But he never thinketh of his precious soul, where that might rest when it left his body. How foolish and faulty are many magistrates in this particular; whilst they live they take special care that when they die their bodies be

Nugas, the Scythian prince, certain royal robes, and rich ornaments, he set light by them, saying, *Nunquid calamitates morbos aut mortem depellere possent?*

[1] How many be too like that Duke d'Alva, who, being asked whether he had observed a late eclipse of the sun, answered, That he had so much business to do on earth, that he had no time to look up to heaven; so they spend so much time on their dying bodies, that they can spare none for their never-dying souls.

in such a vault interred, with such a company of mourners attended, that such a monument be erected, but take no care that when their bodies go to the house appointed for all the living, their souls might go to that house which is not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. They little consider, that when their friends are weeping over their bodies, the devils may be laughing over their souls.

Oh unspeakable folly! to make much of the cabinet, and disesteem of the jewel; to trim the scabbard, and let the sword rust. Like Shimei, to seek their servants, and lose themselves. Man, in regard of his body, claimeth kindred with the beasts of the field; in regard of his soul, with the angels of heaven; and yet this bestial part is pampered, whilst the angelical is starved.

It is storied of Archimedes, that when Syracuse was taken by the Romans, he was secure in his closet, drawing circles with his compass in the dust, and was then and there slain.[1] So these men ordinarily leave the earth when they are most busy about it.

How did the fool in the Gospel promise himself a long and a comfortable life: 'Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years,' Luke xii. 20. If he had said, Soul, take thine ease, thou hast a treasure in heaven, or thou hast Christ, who will do thee good to eternity, it had been somewhat like; but thou hast goods, saith he. Alas! how irrational is this! You may as soon satiate or content *corpus aura*, as *animam auro*, the body with wind, as the soul with wealth. But I beseech you consider, he that thought then to begin to take his ease, is forced that night to make his end. He was but a little before flourishing exceedingly, his mind full of mirth, his heart full of hope, and his soul full of expected satisfaction; but on a sudden he is departed, and all his high hopes frustrated. If you ask me whither he is gone; his estate to men, his body to the grave, his soul to hell. Poor wretch! little did he dream when he was asleep in sin, of going from a bed of feathers to a bed of fire. But too too many, like him, go from carnal pleasures to eternal pains.[2] Take notice how secure this rich fool was; and yet his security was but the forerunner of his future calamity. When the wind lieth, then the great rain falleth. When the air is most quiet, then cometh the great earthquake. When Sisera was asleep, then his head was nailed to the ground. Pharaoh in his chariot, Belshazzar in his bowls, Haman at his banquet, Herod in his robes, are secure, but not safe; when they least

[1] Plut. in Vit. Marcell.

[2] How many die like those that are stung of the tarantula, a viper in Italy, that even die laughing, though they are going to the place where is nothing but weeping.

looked for it, death surprised them: 'When they cried Peace, peace, then sudden destruction seized on them, as travail on a woman with child, which they could not escape,' 1 Thes. v. 3.

Ambitious, like the jay, they are pruning and priding themselves on the top of some high tree, when suddenly a shot from a fowler tumbleth it down dead to the earth.

Covetous, like ants; how busy are they. Like a company of ants about white and yellow earth, when death, like the feet of the next passenger, crusheth them to pieces. Voluptuous, like the little fish that swims merrily down the silver streams of Jordan, till they empty themselves into the Dead Sea, and there perish.

The world's greatest darlings are in no better condition than the bull that goeth to be sacrificed with a garland on his head, and music before him, when suddenly he feeleth the stroke of the murdering axe, and is knocked down dead.

I shall conclude this use with Job's character of this rich sinner, who flourisheth for a time, and perisheth to eternity: 'The wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to hell,' Job. xxi. 7–13.

Exam. Are magistrates mortal? Let me then, in the fear of the Lord, beseech you that are magistrates, now presently to make preparation for the hour of your dissolutions. My counsel shall be, with a little alteration, in the words of the prophet Isaiah to King Hezekiah: 'Now set your house in order, for you must die,' Isa. xxxviii. 6. I must tell you, all the time ye have is little enough for a work of this weight. If Seneca can say, All a man's life is little enough for philosophy, *etiamsi a pueritia, usque ad longissimos humani ævi terminos vita protendatur*, though the silver wire of life should be drawn out to the longest thread, I am sure, then, that all your time is little enough for Christianity. Ye have a great work to do, a great journey to go, and a little time will not be sufficient. Make much of time, saith Aquinas, especially in the weighty matters of salvation. Oh how much would he that now lieth frying in hell rejoice, if he might have the least moment to get God's favour in! The sun of your lives, blessed be God, is not yet set, the gate of mercy is not yet shut. I request you, before the bridge of divine grace be drawn, in this day of God's patience, mind the things that concern your eternal peace. Augustine professeth, he would not be an atheist one quarter of an hour for a world, because he did not know but in that time God might cut asunder his thread of life, and so let him drop into hell.

Let me persuade you, and the good Lord prevail with your hearts, to set yourselves speedily about this necessary work. Delays are dangerous, especially in a business of infinite concernment. How earnestly doth our blessed Saviour exhort you, to be always ready, because ye know not at what hour your Master will call you, Mat. xxiv. 44.[1] Cæsar would never acquaint his soldiers with the time of removing his camp, that they might be always prepared to march.

Consider that on this moment dependeth eternity. God hangeth heavy weights on weak wires. And how dolefully have many complained, and mournfully lamented their loss of time, when it hath been too late.[2] That story of a great lady of our land, which several speak of, may awaken secure ones, when on her death-bed she dreadfully screeched out, A world of wealth for an inch of time! a world of wealth for an inch of time! And I have read of Chrysorius, a man as full of wickedness as of wealth, when he cometh to die, crieth out, *Inducias usque ad mane, Domine*, Truce, Lord, but till morning; truce, Lord, but till morning; and with these words he breathed out his last. *Alterius perditio, tua sit cautio*, Let that which was a murdering piece to others, be a warning piece to thee.

Do but think, should God permit a damned sinner, that is now in hell, to come and sit but one hour amongst you, under the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, how highly would he prize this present opportunity; how greedily would he embrace every tender of mercy; how eagerly would he catch at every word of comfort; how heartily would he close with Christ upon the hardest terms. I am persuaded you should behold him with such streams of tears watering his cheeks, as if he were dissolved into a fountain. And will ye trifle away such golden seasons, and waste such precious advantages, which others would purchase with worlds, if they had them to give; nay, which ye yourselves would redeem hereafter with your heart blood, but shall not be able; oh, therefore, now prize time, before you come to enter upon eternity.[3]

And yet a little further to press this needful duty upon your

[1] Ideo latet unus dies, ut observentur omnes.

[2] Petrarch relateth an answer of one, who, being invited to dinner a day after, said, *A multis annis crastinum non habui. Quam serum est tunc vivere incipere, cum desinendum est!—Sen. ad Paulin.*, cap. 4.

[3] Quare, O miser, non omni hora ad mortem te disponis? Cogita te jam mortuum quem scis necessitate moriturum; mors enim inopiæ non miseretur, divitias non reveretur; non sapientiæ, non moribus, non ætati parcit, nisi quod senibus mors est in januis, juvenibus vero in insidiis.—*Bern.*

spirits. Oh that, if it were the will of God, I had the tongue, the understanding, the affections of an angel! how willingly would I improve them to the utmost, and screw them up to the highest pitch in exhorting you to this weighty and absolutely necessary work!

This, this is the one thing necessary; this, this is the whole duty of man; this is the great end for which ye were born, and the great errand for which ye were sent into the world.[1] It is a work of infinite weight, and a business of everlasting concernment. I speak to you that are great men, and I assure you from the great God that ye must die, and that ye must come ere long to do that which ye never did before, nor never shall do again; even this, to throw your last cast for eternity. Your everlasting weal or woe, joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, dependeth on your well dying. As Scipio said, *In bello non licet bis peccare;* so may I of death, as he of war, In death there is no erring twice; he that erreth once, errs for ever. As soon as ever your souls launch out of your bodies they sail to the ocean of eternity.[2] That we transgress the laws of living so often is the aggravation of iniquity on all men; but that we can transgress the laws of dying but once is the seal of misery on most men.

How pathetically doth God wish that man would mind this real wisdom: 'O that my people were wise, then would they consider their latter end: or that they would consider their latter end,' Deut. xxxii. 29; *vide* 1 Tim. vi. 17–19; Prov. xix. 20.

It seemeth to me one of the dolefullest sayings in the book of God, and, by the way, let men guilty of bribery or oppression think of it, 'He that getteth goods and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and in his latter end shall be a fool,' Jer. xvii. 11. To be a fool, in the judgment or account of Scripture, while a man liveth, speaketh his condition very dangerous; but to be a fool when he dieth, speaketh his estate altogether desperate. For a vessel to leak much in the harbour is sad, but oh how sad is it for the vessel to leak in the main, in the ocean! It was Augustine's prayer, *Hic ure, seca, ibi parce*, Lord, lance me, burn me here, but spare me hereafter.

And the desire of Fulgentius, *Domine, hic da patientiam, postea indulgentiam.*

But it is very emphatical and observable in the fore-quoted place, that the Holy Ghost speaketh: 'In his latter end he shall be a fool.' He was a fool before in the estimation of God, and in the opinion

[1] Mors est æternitatis ostium. [2] Caryl on Job.

of godly men, but now in his latter end he is a fool in the conviction and acknowledgment of his own conscience; and now he will think, Oh what a fool was I, who was ever dying, never to live to my Saviour, to my soul! What a fool was I, to respect so exceedingly my vile transitory body, and to neglect so unworthily my precious, immortal soul! What a fool was I, to make so much provision for a little time, and so little preparation for eternity! What a fool was I, to be so diligent about earth, and so negligent about heaven; so careful about perishing, decaying vanities, and so slothful about real enduring felicities!

Pliny observeth of the mole, that though it be blind all its time of living, yet when it cometh to die, *oculos incipit aperire, moriendo*, then it seeth. Men that, whilst they live, are blind in the worth of their souls, insensible of the weight of their sins, ignorant in the severity of divine justice, incredulous about the necessity of the new birth, when they come to die, their eyes are opened, and they see all these things clearly; and oh then, what a doleful screech will that soul give, that stands quivering upon the pale lips of a dying man, ready to fly to its eternal home, Lam. i. 9, and seeth nothing before it but a bottomless, boundless, ocean of the wrath of God, in which it must swim naked for ever, ever, ever, Num. xxiv. 20.

My lords and gentlemen, I beseech you attend diligently, that this sermon, which is a funeral sermon in regard of its subject, may be a resurrection sermon in regard of its effect. Who knoweth what a day, yea, what a great bellied hour, may bring forth? I can assure you, this sermon is a child of some prayers, yea, and of some tears; therefore I hope it shall not perish. If I speak not the word of God, the mind of Christ, and the meaning of the Spirit, cast back my words as dung in my face; but if I do, hear attentively, and practise conscientiously, lest my counsel rise up in judgment against you at the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

In reference to this great duty of preparing for your dying day, I shall commend six particulars to your most serious thoughts; my prayer shall be that they may all, especially the two latter, be written in your hearts.

1. Discharge your trust faithfully. The way to have great confidence when ye die, is to keep a good conscience whilst ye live. Were judges and justices always to live upon earth, there were no such reason for the impartial execution of justice; but God acquainteth you this day that ye must die, and after death cometh judgment, Heb. ix. 27.

'Judex nuper eram; jam judicis ante tribunal
Subsistens paveo, judicor ipse modo.'

Ye are but stewards, and within a short time ye must give an account of your stewardship. It behoveth you, when you sit on the bench of men, to act faithfully, that when ye shall appear at the bar of God ye may answer comfortably. Remember when ye are passing sentence of life or death on others, that Christ ere long will pass a sentence far more weighty, even of eternal life or death, on you.

It is reported concerning the emperors of Constantinople,[1] that on their coronation day, a mason is appointed to present unto them certain marble stones, saying these verses,

'Elige ab his saxis ex quo (invictissime Cæsar)
Ipse tibi tumulum me fabricare velis.'

If ye that now are in robes would consider, death will level you with them that are in rags; if ye would, with the eye of your meditation, behold your coffins standing before you on the table in the place of judicature, it might be an excellent curb to iniquity, and spur to fidelity.

Now there are four things requisite in a magistrate that he would discharge his trust faithfully.

First, Courage and magnanimity. Every magistrate should be a man of metal, not daunted with dangers, nor frightened with frowns. He should so carry himself that others should fear him, as a terror to evil-doers, but he should fear nothing but sin. Like Chrysostom, who, when a threatening message was sent him from the Empress Eudoxia, Go tell her, said he to the messenger, *Nil timeo nisi peccatum.* Ye are called the shields of the people, Ps. xlvii. 9; and shields ye know are venturous weapons—they are made to bear many blows. 'Be thou strong and very courageous,' Joshua i. 7, saith God to the chief magistrate of Israel. The throne of Solomon was underpropped with lions, 2 Chron. ix. 18; and a lion is part of the royal arms, both speaking that a lion-like spirit is becoming him that is in a public place, Deut. i. 17.[2]

Secondly, Uprightness and integrity. A magistrate, as he should not be frightened with fear, so not swayed by favour: ye should be like a bowl without a bias, running on fairly and evenly, not leaning on this side or on that side; like the sun, which affordeth

[1] Isid.

[2] *Durescito durescito O infelix Landgravi,* said the poor smith to the Landgrave of Thuringia, who was more mild than stood with his people's profit. The sword of justice, saith one, ought to be furbished with the oil of mercy; but there are cases wherein severity should cast the scale.

as gracious influences to the low violets as to the tall cedar, to the poorest beggar as to the most potent emperor; like a public conduit in a city, whence justice should run down like water, as freely and as fully to the meanest as to the greatest.[1] Laws were never made to be nets, only to catch the little fish, and to let the great ones break through.[2] The great Judge of heaven is no respecter of persons, neither should justices on earth, Deut. i. 17.

That edict of Constantine was worthy to be written in letters of gold; If any of my friends, courtiers, or servants have wronged any, let them come to me, I will not only right them, but reward them. And that act of Brutus memorable, who commanded his two sons to be executed, and saw it done, for conspiring with Tarquin's ambassadors against the commonwealth.[3]

Thirdly, Bounty and liberality. A justice should not only not be covetous, but hate covetousness, Exod. xviii. 21. It is the dust of money that is blown up into the judges' eyes, that hindereth their sight into causes, Exod. xxiii. 8.

It was a witty speech of a pious person,[4] He is the best magistrate that is good for nothing. Ye must neither take bribes yourselves, nor by your servants; for *optimus et maximus venderetur imperator*. There is not a gift ye take but will be as a dagger at your hearts another day; like Achan's wedge of gold, it will cleave your souls in sunder. It will in this particular be happy for him that, when he cometh to die, can say, as dying Samuel, 'Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes? And they said, Thou hast not defrauded nor oppressed, nor taken aught of any man's hands,' 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4.

The fourth thing requisite in a magistrate is ability. A magistrate must be not only a man of piety, but a man of parts, quick-sighted, of a deep apprehension, knowing the laws exactly; because if he be not, he will some time or other condemn the innocent, and justify the wicked. And the rather every judge ought to be able, in regard he hath to deal with men that can draw a fair glove over

[1] It is reported of a king of Persia, that he would come off from his horse upon the way to do justice to a poor man.

[2] But it was a bad speech of Cæsar, Causa Cassii melior, sed Bruto nil denegare possum.—*Plut.* in Vit. Cæs.

[3] Plut. in Vit. Public.

[4] Vines on 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, p. 25.

a foul hand; blanch over a bad cause with specious pretences, as Ziba against Mephibosheth.[1]

I honour the profession of the law, and I wish that some men did not dishonour their profession, who indeed value their substance above their consciences, not believing that of the father, *In die judicii plus valebit conscientia pura, quam marsupia plena.*

Beza telleth us, that he once saw on a table the pictures of four sorts of persons, and their several posies. 1. The courtier with this posy, By my sword I defend you all. 2. The clergyman with this posy, By my prayers I preserve you all. 3. The countryman with this, I feed you all. 4. The lawyer with this, I devour you all. I request lawyers to consider that of God to Moses, 'Thou shalt not speak in a cause to wrest judgment,' Exod. xxiii. 2; and that speech of the apostle, 'I can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,' 2 Cor. xiii. 8. But I have digressed too far already.

Secondly, If ye would fit yourselves for death, live among men exemplarily. You that must die shortly, had need to live strictly. Must you ere long fall, then whilst you stand be holy to admiration, to imitation. *Nihil sic revocat a peccatis sicut frequens meditatio mortis.* Some say the stroking of the belly with the hand of a dead man will cure the tympany; I am sure the thoughts of death seriously laid to the heart are a good medicine for an evil heart.

Nothing in the war will so much dead the cannon, as a mound of earth. The consideration that ye shall be turned into earth, should dead the cannons of temptation which Satan shoots against your souls: 'As pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,' 1 Pet. ii. 11. Lycurgus made the first law that the dead should be buried about the temples, intimating thereby that they which are dying should be very religious.[2] Nothing maketh death evil but the evil that goeth before it; for without that no evil could follow after it.[3] I have read of one that gave a ring with a death's-head to a young ruffian, upon this condition, that he should meditate on it one hour every day for seven days together, which he did, and through the help of God, it wrought a blessed change in him. Take a turn or two daily in Golgotha; walk often among the tombs; ponder frequently your own frailty; it may much quicken you to walk exemplarily.

Your high places call for holy practices. It is esteemed one of King Alphonsus's sayings, that a great man cannot commit a little

[1] There are they that can make *candida de nigris, et de candentibus alba.*

[2] Plut.

[3] Nihil facit mortem malam nisi malum quod præcedit, vel sequitur.

sin.[1] I must tell you, ye have many following you either to heaven or hell, in the narrow or broad way; ye had need to choose a right path. Great men's vices are as seldom unaccompanied as their persons. Dives was a great man, and a bad pattern, and he had many brethren following him to the place of torment. Men are led more by the eye than by the ear, and follow rather the doings of magistrates, than the sayings of ministers.[2]

'Componitur orbis
Regis ad exemplum; nec sic inflectere sensus
Humanos edicta valent, quam vita regentum.'—*Claudian.*

Sin, indeed, cometh in at first by propagation, but is much increased by imitation.

Ye are the heads of the people,[3] Num. vii. 2; Micah iii. 11. If the head be giddy, the body must needs reel. Ill humours from the head destroy and consume the vitals in the body.

Ye are the nurses of the people, Isa. xlix. 23; and our naturalists observe that what disease nurses have, the children will partake of. Now how will it gall your consciences, when ye come to die, if ye have been ringleaders in iniquity, and not patterns of piety. Believe it, ringleaders in a rebellion will be most severely punished; and with those whom ye have made wicked without repentance, ye will be made eternally woeful.

Take up the practice of dying Joshua, who was going the way of all the earth: 'I and my house will serve the Lord,' Joshua xxiv. 15.

Theodosius the emperor, being asked how a prince might promote good abroad, answered, By ordering all well at home.[4] If ye cannot rule your family well, ye are unfit to rule cities and counties. Let me request you to follow David's pattern: 'I will walk in the midst of my house with a perfect heart until thou come unto me,' Ps. ci. 2; or, 'oh when wilt thou come unto me,' lest when ye come to die, ye have cause to cry out as she did: 'They made me keeper of others' vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept,' Cant. i. 6.

[1] As Cæsar said, that Cæsar's wife should be without all suspicion of fault.

[2] Vivitur exemplis potius quam legibus.

[3] Many say to such, as Tiberius to Justinus, *Si tu volueris ego sum, si tu non vis ego non sum.*

[4] It is a great praise that Melanchthon ascribeth to George, prince of Anhalt: His bed-chamber, saith he, was *Academia, curia, templum.* And Xenophon of Cyrus, that a man might wink and choose among his courtiers, he could not miss of a good man.

Thirdly, As your frailty calleth upon you to be faithful in your places, holy in your practices; so likewise, in the third place, to walk humbly with God. I would have others to have high thoughts of you, because ye are gods; but I desire you to have low thoughts of yourselves, because ye must die like men. Pride, as one observeth, is the shirt of the soul, put on first, and put off last; it is a weed that will grow in the best soil; but men that are highest in place, are usually highest in spirit.[1] It is rare to see a man great in others' eyes, and little in his own. Honour is often the stinking breath of the vulgar, which being blown into the bladder of a graceless heart, causeth it to swell. But here is a pin in the text to prick this bladder, and take down its swelling. Did you but spiritually consider the brittleness of your bodies, it would abate the swelling of your spirits. I should think the evil disposition of your souls, and the frail condition of your bodies, should keep you low while ye live.

Alas! notwithstanding all your powers, places, or preferments, what are ye but clods of clay—a little refined earth, moving slime, enlivened dust, breathing ashes? Some naturalists observe of bees, that when they rise and buzz on high, if you throw dust upon them, they will house and be quiet. When your thoughts are lifted up on high, because of those places in which God hath set you, I pray cast some dust on those thoughts; remember ye shall be laid as low as the worms are. Abraham was a prince, a great man, but how much did this thought humble him: 'Lo, I have undertaken to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes,' Gen. xviii. 27. I have read of Agathocles, king of Sicily, that being a potter's son, he would be always served in earthen vessels, to mind him of his original. Some write of a bird so light and feathery, that it is forced to fly with a stone in its mouth, lest the wind should carry it away. The truth is, men that are high in place, are apt to be carried away with the wind of high-mindedness; they had need therefore to have earth in their minds, I mean their frailty, and it may prove, through the blessing of Heaven, a singular preservative.[2]

Oh that you who are judges and justices, would but take the length of your bodies in the dust, where ye must ere long lie, and believe that a little distemper will kill you, a little sheet will wind

[1] A magistrate should be like a star or spire-steeple, the higher he is the lesser he should seem to be.

[2] There was one Willigis, Bishop of Mentz, who, being son to a wheelwright, caused wheels to be hanged on the walls up and down his palace, with these words written over them, *Willigis, Willigis, recole unde veneris.*

you, a little grave hold you, little worms feed on you, and a little time quite consume you. Could ye then be great in your own eyes? Remember that your remembrance is like unto dust, and your bodies are bodies of clay, Job xiii. 12.

Fourthly, Must ye die, and would ye prepare for it, then be active for God whilst ye live; the serious thoughts of death in your hearts will put life into your hands. This life is all your day of working, death is the night of resting: 'The dead rest from their labours,' Rev. xiv. 13: 'When the sun' of man's life 'ariseth, he goeth forth unto his labour until the evening' of death, Ps. civ. 23. The heavenly bodies are ever in motion, though the earth stand still; and the more pure any being is, the more active it is. *Deus est actus purus.* Fire is the most active of creatures without life; angels of creatures that have life. Oh shew yourselves to be as angels amongst men, by walking humbly with God. The angels vail their faces in his presence, by working diligently for God; angels are ever employed in the service of God.

Work industriously in your general callings as Christians. 'Yet a little while the light is with you. Walk while ye have the light,' John xii. 35. The task of Christianity is great; the time ye have is little, the time ye have lost is much. Oh now bestir yourselves in redeeming time, and improving every opportunity to the best advantage of your souls. How fervently should ye pray, as not knowing but that every prayer ye pray may be your last prayer; that ye may never have another season to beg mercy in for your souls, for your relations, for the afflicted members of the Lord Jesus! How attentively, and how hungerly should ye hear the word of life, even as for life! How carefully, and how conscientiously should ye keep the Sabbath, considering ye may be very near your eternal Sabbath! How sedulously should ye hang on every ordinance, as bees on flowers, never leaving them till ye have sucked some honey, some sweetness, from them! Ponder this, there can be but a few days, and ye shall never pray more, never hear more, never sanctify Lord's day more, never enjoy ordinances more.[1] I that am now preaching, and ye that are now hearing, must shortly be carried on men's backs, and laid in the belly of the earth; and can we do too much in so little time, especially in a work of such infinite weight!

The devil is the more busy because his time is short, Rev. xii. 12, and therefore striveth, in a quick despatch of the works of darkness, to outwit the children of light. The time is short, therefore

[1] Præcipitat tempus; mors atra impendet agenti.

be indifferent about earth, 1 Cor. vii. 29; the time is short, therefore be diligent about heaven. The word is, the time is rolled up, ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος; it is a metaphor from mariners. The sails that were spread before, when they draw nigh to the haven, are then rolled up: you know not how soon the sails of your lives may be rolled up, how nigh ye are to your eternal haven; oh bestir yourselves carefully, ply the oars diligently, that the vessels of your souls may not miscarry eternally! 'Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device, in the grave, whither thou goest,' Eccles. ix. 10.

Work industriously in your particular callings, as magistrates, because ye must die. Be active for the punishment of iniquity, for the encouragement of piety. Let the practice of Christ be your pattern: 'I must work the work of God while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work,[1]' John ix. 4. To work a work noteth the strong intention of his spirit about the work: Christ, though he was rich, 2 Cor. viii. 9, and for greatness the Lord's equal, Phil. ii. 6; yet did not, as many rich and great men do, play his work; he did sweat at work, yea he sweat drops, nay, clods of blood, Luke xxii. 44. Now be ye followers of Christ as dear children, and think you can never do enough for that Saviour which hath done so much for your souls. How sad is it, that great bodies should move so slowly![2]

How many talents hath God committed to you? when others have one, ye have ten. A talent is anything that a man is betrusted with to glorify God, and it is called a talent because of the great price that is in the least opportunity to honour God.[3] Ye have many such talents; ye may hinder much wickedness, further much holiness; be a great terror to evil-doers, a great praise to them that do well. Let it not be said of you, that ye do the work of the Lord negligently.

Did not Christ humble himself for you? and shall you think it below you to search alehouses, those headquarters of hell; to inquire into men's observation of God's day; to use all means whereby ye may know men's profanation of God's name, by hellish oaths, and cursed blasphemies, and abuse of God's creatures by drunken-

[1] Ἐμὲ δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα.

[2] Magnarum rerum tarda mole molimina.

[3] Nothing more sads the heart when a man comes to die, than his neglect of such opportunities which God's providence or his own place have put into his hands of doing or receiving good; nor is there a sharper corrosive than the reflection upon those days that have passed over him, *Male, aliud, nihil, agentem.*—*Vines Ess. Fun.*, p. 19. Phil. ii. 7.

ness, that so they may be severely punished? [1] Alas! a few days will come, and the best of you shall have no such opportunity to discover your love to God for his abundant mercies, your thankfulness to Christ for his precious merits: do therefore now act to the utmost of your power for the glory of God, and your Saviour.

Be not like the tallest trees, which bring forth either no fruit, or that which is only for swine. Remember God puts no difference betwixt *nequaquam et nequam*, an idle and an evil servant; the unprofitable servant is for outer darkness, Mat. xxv. 26–30.

Do but consider the time of your departure may be at hand; and should not this resolution be in your hearts, to act vigorously and strenuously for God? The nearer ye are to your centre, the faster ye should move: the setting sun shineth most brightly; the dying swan sings most sweetly; the approaches of a needle are so much the more quick, by how much it draweth nearer to the loadstone; the rivers run with a stronger stream when they are about to empty themselves into the ocean. Ye are nearer death than ever; be quicker in your motions for God than ever, that it may be said of every one of you, how young soever ye may die, as one said of Jewell, *Diu vixit etsi non diu fuit.*

Fifthly, Must ye die, and would ye prepare for death? labour to find some inward work of grace wrought upon your hearts; be not contented with forms, but mind the power of godliness.[2] A man may live by a form, but he cannot die by a form; a heart not balanced with grace may hold out in the calm of life, but when the boisterous winds of sickness blow, and the storm of death cometh, it will suffer shipwreck: when death cometh, when that damp ariseth, the candle of profession, separated from the power of religion, will first burn blue, and then go out: the bellows of death will blow the spark of sincerity into a flame, and the blaze of hypocrisy into nothing. Oh therefore get that saying of our Saviour written on your hearts: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he can never see the kingdom of God,' John iii. 3. A worthy divine, now in heaven,[3] observeth four things from this verse: 1. The manner of the assertion, 'Verily, verily.' 2. The matter asserted, 'except a man be born again;' *Non unius partis correctionem, sed totius naturæ renovationem designat.*—(Calvin.) 3. The universality of the assertion; it is equivalent to a uni-

[1] Magistrates are *custodes utriusque tabulæ.* Socrates was adjudged to death by the Athenians for a dishonourable speech concerning their gods.—*Plut. in Vit. Nici. Vide* Lev. xxiv. 16; Job xxxi. 26–28.

[2] Oportet imperatorem stantem mori.—*Vespa.*

[3] Pious Mr Strong on Heb. xii. 14, p. 39, *vide.*

versal proposition. Though he be a man civil in his conversation, a saint in his generation, yet he must be born again. 4. The necessity of it; without regeneration no salvation; he cannot see the kingdom of God.

You know what the pharisees were; how strict in their lives, according to the law blameless, Phil. iii. 6; how abundant in duty, Mat. xxiii. 14; they made long prayers, Mat. vi.; gave much alms, Luke xviii. 12; fasted twice a week, Mat. xxiii. 15; compassed sea and land to make proselytes; nay, they were so holy that the Jews would speak commonly, That if but two in the world went to heaven, the one should be a scribe and the other a pharisee. Yet our Saviour speaketh expressly: 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God,' Mat. v. 20. Pharisaical holiness will never evidence your right to eternal happiness.[1] He that considereth how great their privileges, how seemingly gracious their practices were, will at first wonder why Christ should set a double bolt on heaven's gate to keep them out. But their chief failing was in this which I am exhorting you to, namely, in the want of the power of godliness. Their actions, to the eye of man, good, but their affections were bad; their practices did not proceed from renewed and gracious principles. Whatsoever civility was without in the life, there was no real sanctity within in the heart.

You that are magistrates may probably be free from scandalous enormities. None can tax you, it may be, with swearing, drunkenness, whoredom, or the like; nay, I hope you go farther, that ye perform duty in secret by yourselves, in private with your wives and children, in public with the congregation; that ye instruct your families in the things of God, and be earnest with all under your power to mind their eternal good. These things are commendable, and the Lord increase the number of such magistrates; but I must tell you, that though this reformation in your lives be good, yet without an alteration and change in your hearts, it is not sufficient. I may say to you, as Christ to the young man, 'One thing lackest thou yet.' As the rude satyr in Plutarch, who strove to make a dead man stand upright, had so much wit as to say, *Deest aliquid intus*, There wants something within; so I say to you, If ye go no further, there is spiritual life, the seed of God, the divine nature, the new creation, the power of godliness wanting within; without this all other things will come to nothing. Alchymy gold may shine brighter than true gold; but, as some observe, it

[1] οὐ μὴ, Duo negativa apud Græcos vehementius negant.

will neither cheer the heart as a cordial, nor pass the seventh fire. A drachm of true grace will be of more worth to you, when ye come to die, than a sea of gifts. Heaven is the Father's house, and none can come thither but his own children, such as are born of God.

Lastly, If ye must die, to prepare yourselves for death, make sure of an interest in Christ, in the death of the Lord Jesus. There is no shroud to this—namely, to be wrapt in the winding-sheet of Christ's righteousness.

I would request you to discharge your trusts so faithfully, to work for heaven so industriously, to walk with God so humbly, to live among men so exactly and exemplarily, to mind the renovation of your natures so carefully, out of thankfulness to God for his Son, out of affection to him that hath loved you, and washed you in his blood, out of a desire to clear up your title to the covenant of grace, as if ye were to be justified by your works, to purchase heaven by your holiness; but when ye have done all, throw them away as filthy rags, Isa. lxiv. 6, as a menstruous cloth, as dung and dross, Phil. iii. 8, 9, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

He that is to encounter with this grand enemy, death, had need to have armour of proof, John xi. 25, 26; and as David said of Goliath's sword, so I of this death of Christ, There is no weapon like it. That which makes a man die with true courage, and step with a holy boldness unto the grave, is to remember that Christ died not only before him, but for him, and hath conquered and vanquished the king of terrors upon his own dunghill.

I desire, saith the apostle, to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified. All the mercies that believers enjoy, come streaming to them in the blood of Christ; though there be much attributed to his intercession, yet that, like the king's stamp on silver, addeth no real value to it, only maketh it current.[1] By his death sin is pardoned, Eph. i. 7; God's justice satisfied, Eph. i. 6, and v. 2; his wrath appeased, Col. ii. 14, 15; Heb. ii. 14; Satan vanquished, the curse of the law endured, Gal. iii. 13; grace purchased for the saints here, Tit. ii. 14; Heb. ix. 14; and an eternal weight of glory hereafter, John xiv. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56.

The whole ring of Christ's mediatorship surely takes its value, not only from the diamond of his divinity, but also from the passion of his humanity. It is out of the carcase of this lion of the

[1] Calvin observeth on 1 John ii. 1, that Christ's intercession is nothing else but a perpetual application of his death. Christ intercedeth by showing to his Father his wounds in his hands and side, *quot vulnera, tot ora,* to plead for sinners.

tribe of Judah that the true Samsons get so much honey of comfort. Thence it is that the apostle rings such a challenge in the ears of death: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God, which hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'[1] The apostle speaketh as alluding to a soldier that, having fought with, and disarmed his adversary, triumpheth: O sir! where is your sword wherewith you threatened so bitterly? Where is your pistol, with which you would wound me mortally? O death! where is thy sting, with which thou threatenedst to make me smart eternally? O grave! where is that victory of which thou boasteth so exceedingly? Thanks be to God, that hath given us the victory through Christ. Christ died not only *in bonum fidelium, sed in loco eorum,* not only for their good, but in their stead. Now death, like a bee, left its sting, and lost its sting in Christ, that now it may make a noise, but cannot sting the believer.

Surely, if Jacob could say, when he had seen Joseph, 'Now let me die, since I have seen thy face,' Gen. xlvi. 30, the soul that, with the eye of faith, hath seen this Son of Joseph, may with greater boldness dare death, and encounter the grave. How sweetly doth old Simeon sing out his soul's requiem; having, saith one, laid in his heart that holy child Jesus, whom he lapt in his arms, Luke ii. 29, 30, sings his *nunc dimittas!* I fear no sin, I dread no death. I have lived enough, I have my life; I have longed enough, I have my love. I have seen enough, I have my light. I have served enough, I have my saint. (?) I have sorrowed enough, I have my joy. Sweet babe, let this psalm serve for a lullaby to thee, and for a funeral to me. Oh, do thou sleep in my arms, and let me sleep in thy peace!

Be not contented with any gift from God beneath his Son.[2] Say, as Abraham, 'Lord, what wilt thou give me if I go Christless?' Lord, thou hast given a plentiful estate, comfortable kindred, a goodly dwelling, lovely children, much honour from men, many lawful pleasures and delights; but ah, Lord! what are these to a Christ? Give me Christ, or I die; yea, Lord, give me Christ, or I die eternally.

View thy Saviour on the cross, fighting with this last enemy for

[1] *Vide* Mr Herbert's Temple; Dialogue between the Christian and Death, p. 164. Lenietur mortis damnum; non enim est invicta ut antea, cum Christus illam superavit, ac in suo certamine crucis, fælicissime vicit.—*Pet. Martyr. loc. comm. de Luct. pro mort.*

[2] Valde protestatus sum me nolle sic a Deo satiari.—*Luther; Melch. Adam in Vit. Luth.*

thy sins, for thy soul. See his arms stretched out to embrace thee, his head hanging down to kiss thee, his feet nailed, that he cannot run from thee, his side opened, to shew thee how nigh thou liest to his heart; and take him down with the arms of faith, and lay him in the sepulchre of thy soul. Oh, be not faithless, but believing! Cry out, My Lord, and my God!

I tell thee, couldst thou heap up mountains of prayers—couldst thou pray so frequently that thy heart even bled within thee, and so frequently that thy knees were as hard as camels' knees, as is reported of James, the brother of our Lord—couldst thou weep, as some speak of Mary Magdalene in Balba, thirty years together—couldst thou fast as many millions of years as there have been moments since the creation—yet without an interest in this death of Christ it would all be of no worth, of no value, to no purpose at all.

I shall, in the next place, annex some motives, that the former particulars may have the deeper impression on your affections.

1. Consider how vain and unprofitable all other things will be to you when ye fall;—do but ponder that word, fall;—when ye die.

(1.) Ye fall from the highest pinnacle of honour and reputation.[1] The place of magistracy, which knoweth you now, will know you no more. One of the ancients, standing by Cæsar's tomb, crieth out, *Ubi nunc pulchritudo Cæsaris? quo abiit magnificentia ejus?* Where is now the beauty; what is become of the magnificence; where are the armies now; where the honours, the triumphs, the trophies of Cæsar? All was gone when Cæsar was gone. Your honours and your worships, your power and your places, all die with you, if not before you. Titles of honour glister, like glow-worms, in the dark night of this life; but in the day of death they all vanish and disappear. It is probable some of you may be nobly born, finely bred, highly advanced; but when ye come to die, ye may say of all these, as Esau of his birthright, 'Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?' Gen. xxv. 32. What good will my honour, my credit, do me? Christ will do me good when I come to die; so will the power of godliness: but none of my places or preferments will.

(2.) Ye fall from your greatest treasures and possessions. As ye brought nothing into the world, so it is certain ye shall carry

[1] Honour is called δόξα, an opinion, Mat. iv. 8; φαντασία, a fancy, Acts xxv. 23; σχήμα, a mathematical figure, a mere notion, 1 Cor. vii. 31. One was appointed at the pope's enthronisation to burn a wad of straw, and, running before the pope, to cry out, *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

nothing out of the world, 1 Tim. vi. 7. Saladin, the mighty monarch of the east, is gone, and hath carried no more along with him than ye see—*i.e.*, a shirt hung up for that purpose—said the priest that went before the bier.[1]

The Holy Ghost observeth well, that rich men are by their wealth rich only in this world, 1 Tim. vi. 17, and they are this world's goods, 1 John iii. 17; for, as the martyr said, I am going to the place where money beareth no mastery; in another world, gold and silver are not current coin. A divine, now with Christ,[2] giveth me two stories of dying rich men. The one is of a miser, that, being to die, called for his bags, and hugging them, crieth out, Must I leave you? must I leave you? The other is of one that, being on his death-bed, called for some pieces of gold, and laid them to his heart; but presently said, I find them cold, take them away; they will not do, they will not do. The unsearchable riches that are in Christ will do; his warm blood applied by faith will not be cold to thy heart.

(3.) Ye fall from all your friends and relations; when ye die, they that were near and dear to you will leave you. Ye may, when ye lie on your death-beds, look on your left hands, and there is none to help you; on your right hands, and there is none to pity you: on the one side of the bed, thy neighbours may be sighing and sobbing; on the other side, thy wife and children may be wringing their hands and rending their hearts; but if thou canst not then, with David, look up and say, 'Lord, thou art my refuge,' Ps. cxlii. 4, 5, oh, what a sighing, sobbing, weeping condition art thou in indeed!

Oh what a comforting cordial will it be to a dying person to be able, in uprightness of heart, to say, with Asaph, 'My flesh and my heart fail me; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever,' Ps. lxxiii. 26.[3] When news cometh that ye must die, can the ablest physician in the world prescribe or provide such a cordial as good Hezekiah had? He turned to the wall and weepeth, saying, 'Lord, thou knowest I have walked before thee with a perfect heart,' Isa. xxxviii. 2, 3.

Believe me, sirs, your honours, treasures, and relations will shake

[1] All the Cains of Adam are Abels; all the possessions of man are vanity.—*Mr Broughton.*

[2] Holy Mr Burroughs.

[3] It was an excellent saying of a worthy person to a great peer of this realm that shewed him his houses, goods, lands, honours, pleasures, and the like: My lord, you had need to make sure of heaven, otherwise your Lordship will be a very great loser when you die.

hands with you at death; like leaves in autumn, fall from you; like Absalom's mule, fail you even in your greatest extremity. Then Dives and his dishes, Herod and his harlot, Belshazzar and his bowls, Achan and his wedges, Balaam and his wages, the ambitious man and his honours, voluptuous man and his pleasures, covetous man and treasures, must part, and that for ever, ever. Doth it not concern you, then, to choose that part, that shall never be parted with, which shall never be taken from you?

2. By this means your names may be highly honoured; true glory is entailed on piety. The heathen would go through the temple of virtue to the temple of honour. 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom; length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour,' Prov. iii. 13, 15.

I do not say that wicked men shall commend you for godliness; no, their good word were a blot to your names.[1] What evil have I done, said the philosopher, that this vicious wretch speaketh well of me? Yet godliness will make you like statues of gold, which the polluted breath of ungodly ones cannot stain: the more the dirty feet of men rub on a figure graven in brass, the more lustre they give it; but God and godly men will honour you for holiness. What doth God say of a living saint? 'Hast thou not considered my servant Job?' Job i. 8—*i.e.*, I am sure, in thy travels and wanderings about the world, thou couldst not choose but take notice of Job; he is my jewel, my darling, a special man among all the sons of men: he is such a spectacle as may justly draw all eyes and hearts after him. When thou walkedst to and fro, didst thou not make a stand at Job's door?[2] I cannot but look upon him myself, and consider him; therefore surely thou hast considered him. And how honourably doth God speak, not only of a godly magistrate living, but when he is dead also! 'Moses my servant is dead,' Joshua i. 2; 'The seed of Abraham my friend,' Isa. xli. 8. So godly men will honour you if ye fear God. When your eyes are shut, men's mouths will be open; and what will good men say of a pious judge: There was a judge that would not swerve a tittle from the law, but executed it courageously, without fear, impartially, without favour; who made the malefactor to tremble with

[1] Salvian complained that in his time men thought religion made noblemen vile; when indeed, saith he, it maketh vile men noble.

[2] Caryl *in loc.*, Job was a godly magistrate. Godliness doth truly ennoble a person. The four monarchs, without it, are resembled to four beasts: king Herod to a fox; Nero to a lion; the princes of Israel to the kine of Bashan.

Nam genus et proavos et quæ non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco.—*Ovid.*

his frowns, and cheered the innocent with his smiles. He was one that did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God; of whom the world was not worthy, for he is now enjoying a weight of glory. And of a good justice when dead, what a character will good men living give! There was a justice that would secure his conscience,[1] whatever became of his credit; that would please God, how much soever he displeased men; that was not only strict to punish, but active to find out swearers, drunkards, and Sabbath-breakers. He was one that ever counted the toleration of men in such sins an intolerable sin; or, if you will have it, in the language of a learned divine now in heaven, he was a justice that would scatter drunkards from their ale-bench, and never understood the language of a bottle or a basket. Oh how gallantly, if ye act nobly for God, will these trumpets sound your praises when ye are in the place of silence!

When of a wicked magistrate they will speak, when he is dead, as Nazianzen of Julian, when he was smitten and wounded, It was to him indeed *vulnus lethale*, but *παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ σωτήριον*, the sickness whereby he died was, possibly, damnation to him, but it was salvation to us: we are thereby freed from his wicked pattern and ungodly practices.[2] Or as the Romans of Pompey, by a witty solecism, *Miseria nostra magnus est*, The more he was advanced, the more our misery increased. The very heathen can tell us of a long-lived vicious man, *Diu fuit, non diu vixit. Multum jactatus est, non multum navigavit.*[3] Believe me, the highest ungodly magistrate, when he dieth, goeth out like a candle, that leaves a stinking scent, a noisome smell, behind him.

3. Hereby your deaths will be truly peaceable. An ungodly man can never die with true peace, though he may die in much security. He may die by his own hands, and yet not with his own will. Such a man's soul is taken from him, and snatched away by force, Luke xii. 20; Job xxvii. 8.

Were I not by experience too too much acquainted how hard and desperately wicked the heart of man is, I should much wonder how any man should die in his wits, that dieth not in the faith of Christ; that their souls go not out of their bodies, as the devils out of them that were possessed, rending, raging, foaming, and tearing. I am confident, were the conscience awakened, no graceless wretch

[1] Pious Master Vines, at Essex Fu., p. 15.

[2] Caligula could say of his father-in-law, Marcus Silanus, that he was but a golden brute.

[3] Senec. ad Paulin., cap. 8.

alive can look death in the face with blood in his cheeks. It must needs make the stoutest heart alive to quake, to look that distemper in the face, that at once may both kill him and damn him.

Yet we see by experience that many die like lambs, whilst their souls are amongst lions, and they are going to the place of dragons.[1] We read, there are no bands in the death of rich wicked men, Ps. lxxiii. 4. And that phrase in Job xxi. 13, 'In a moment they go down to the grave,' is generally interpreted thus: They die quickly and quietly. *In quiete in infernum descendunt*, saith an expositor, like a lamp that goeth out of itself when the oil faileth. So Cæsar said, the day before he was slain, *Finis vitæ commodissimus est repentinus et inopinatus;* and Julian the apostate said, *Vitam reposcenti naturæ tanquam debitor bonæ fidei, redditurus, exulto.* But this quietness ariseth—or rather carnal security to them—not from any knowledge of their good estate, but from ignorance of their bad estate. 'A wicked man's hope is like the giving up of the ghost,' Job xi. 20. He breathes out his soul, life, and hope together.

The good man only hath true hope in his death,[2] Prov. xiv. 32; Ps. xxxiii. and xxxvii. I am neither ashamed to live, nor afraid to die, having a good master to go to, said Ambrose. And how man-like did that feminine martyr subscribe her confession: Subscribed by me, Ann Askew, that neither wisheth for death, nor feareth its might, but is as merry as one that is bound for heaven.[3] He that with the apostle can say, 'I have fought a good fight,' 2 Tim. iv. 8, may sail with a plerophory, with top and top-gallant, into the ocean of eternity. A happy death is the conclusion of a holy life. The godly man and his godliness are like Saul and Jonathan, lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they are not divided.

Now what an argument is here to stir you up to godliness. Is anything more desirable than a good end, than to do your last act well? The evening crowns the day. The last scene commends the act: *Finis perficit tam agentem quam actionem.* Balaam could

[1] Aristotle, when dying, spake thus, saith one: *Dubius morior, quo vadam, nescio.* And Adrian, more dolefully: *Animula, vagula, blandula, quæ nunc abibis in loca,* &c.

[2] Some of the martyrs thanked their judges for condemning them: *Sententiis vestris gratias agimus, cum damnamur a vobis a deo absolvimur.—Tertul. Apol.*, cap. 5. Si vis in pace mori, sis servus dei.

[3] Fox's Acts, vol. ii. p. 576. Extrema Christianorum desiderantur etsi non exordia. Florus saith of the Romans, *Populus Romanus sæpe prœliis, nunquam bello victus:* They were often conquered in skirmishes, but never in a pitched battle. The godly may be often foiled in their lives, but never in their deaths. At that long run they are always too hard for their most potent adversaries.

desire to die the death of the righteous, and to have his latter end like theirs, Num. xxiii. 10. The papists have a proverb, It is good to live in France, because there is most liberty, and to die in Italy, there is most popish purity and strictness. When Julius Cæsar was surprised and wounded in the senate, he cast his robe about him, *ut honeste caderet*, that he might die decently. If ye would not die ill, then be sure ye live well; let holiness be your way, and happiness shall be your end.

4. This will make your estates and conditions eternally comfortable. Death to you then will be no night, but the daybreak of eternal brightness. Oh what welcome will Christ give that magistrate in heaven that hath served him faithfully on earth! All the good ye do for God or his people is now perfectly recorded, and shall then be bountifully rewarded. It is observable the epistles to the churches begin with *novi opera*, and end with *vincenti dabo*, to assure us that Christ is a strict observer of our good works at first, and will be a rich rewarder of them at last.

All your industry in your general callings of Christianity, all your prayers, are now on the file in heaven; all your tears for sin are in God's bottle; all your fastings, watchings, duties in secret between God and your own souls, in public in the great congregation; all your sedulity in your particular callings of magistracy; all your pains to preserve us in peace; all your labour for the Lord's honour; all your justifying the righteous, condemning the wicked; all the good ye do, evil ye prevent, if done out of conscientious principles, are not lost, but will all be found to your praise, honour, and glory at the coming of Christ.[1] Duty is sweet at last; it cometh off with heaven, though hell dog it for a time. If God give that magistrate Jehu, 2 Kings x. 30, who served him in hypocrisy, an earthly kingdom to the fourth generation, surely he will give a heavenly kingdom that is eternal to those magistrates that serve him in sincerity.[2]

Oh how comfortable will your conditions be when ye die! If ye be cordial to God, and zealous for God, whilst ye live, ye shall be with Christ: is not that enough? Did the wise men rejoice so much

[1] Locker.

[2] If God valued counterfeit coin at so high a rate, how highly will he value true gold! Esse Christum cum Paulo summa securitas, esse Paulum cum Christo summa felicitas.—*Ber.* Aug. on those words, 'No man can see me and live,' saith, *Moriar, Domine, ut te videam.* Augustine desired to see *Romam in flore, Paulum in ore, Christum in corpore.* Bede cometh after him, and correcteth his last thus: *Imo vero regem in solio stellato sedentem*, the king in his glory rather. I wish for death, saith Melanchthon, *ut desiderato fruar conspectu Christi.—Melch. Ad.*

to see the star, and will not your hearts, think ye, rejoice much more to see the sun in its noonday brightness? This was the ground of Paul's desiring death, Phil. i. 23. This was the rich inheritance that Christ bequeathed to his in his last will and testament, John xvii. 24. This was the enlivening cordial which the physician of souls administered to the dying thief, Luke xxiii. 43. In a word, this is the top of the saints' ambition here, and the apex of their perfection hereafter, even to enjoy Christ. Ignatius could say, Fire, cross, breaking of my bones, quartering of my members, and all the torments that man and devil can invent, let come, so I may enjoy my Lord Jesus. And Jerome thus sweetly: If my father stood weeping on his knees before me, and my mother hanging on my neck behind, and my brethren, sisters, children, and kinsfolk howling on every side to retain me in a sinful life, I would fling my mother to the ground, run over my father, tread my kindred under my feet, that I might run to Christ. What is that which causeth the saint to be so busy about the Scriptures, but because they are they that testify of Christ; they prize the cabinet for the jewel's sake. What maketh the godly man so frequent at prayer? Surely because therein he enjoyeth communion with his Saviour, with Jesus Christ: his voice to every ordinance is, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' Now this is the felicity of the magistrate that is godly, he shall be with Christ when he dieth. There will be a perfect freedom from all evil. When the sun is at the highest, there shall be no shadow. When the Christian hath passed this Red Sea, he shall see all his enemies, both bodily and spiritual, dead on the shore.

There will be a full fruition of all good: 'In his presence will be fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. The presence of this king will make a court indeed. There will be all that thine eye ever saw, or thine heart ever desired, or thy tongue ever asked, or thy mind ever conceived; yea, ten thousand times more than thou canst either ask or think. There will be all beams of light in this sun, all streams of water in this ocean, out of whom, as out of a crystal fountain, thou shalt drink down all the refined sweetness of all creatures in heaven and earth for ever. And this condition will be eternally thus comfortable, 1 Thes. iv. 17. 'We shall ever be with the Lord.' Oh how sweet is that word, ever! Ever to be happy, and ever happy; to enjoy Christ fully, immediately, and ever to enjoy him. Certainly as the word *ever* is the hell of hell, so it is the heaven of heaven. Frailty is a flaw in the best diamond of nature, which abateth its

price. Eternity is one of the most precious jewels in the crown of glory, which increaseth its value exceedingly.[1]

What an argument is here to incite you to live to Christ! Why? When ye die ye shall eternally live with Christ. When the Gauls had once tasted the wine made of the grapes in Italy, they marched eagerly, desiring to conquer it.[2] I have given you a taste of Canaan's grapes: oh use violence for the inheritance above! 'Be constant, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58.

To conclude all: It is reported that Scipio Africanus, when he had any weighty work in hand, would go before day into the capitol, *in cœlum Jovis, quasi consultans de republica cum Jove;* and also that Moses, in four causes which came before him, two whereof were not weighty, and two were more material, *cæterum tam de his quam de illis dicebat, Non audivi.*[3] Of both the lighter and weightier Moses said, I have not heard—to wit, from the Lord; to shew that a deliberation and consultation, as it were, with God ought to be in all judgment before sentence be pronounced.[4] Your custom, sirs, is commendable, to make your supplication to God before the administration of justice to men. I beseech you again and again, in the bowels of Christ, as ye would have your Saviour to stand by you, when all your friends, estates, honours will fail you; as ye would have your names to smell a sweet savour in the churches of God, when your bodies shall be rotten; as ye would die the deaths of the righteous, and have your latter end like theirs; as ye would render up your accounts with joy, when ye must appear at the judgment seat of Christ, now execute justice impartially, live among your inferiors exemplarily, walk with God humbly, work for God zealously, mind the power of sanctity, and know a crucified Saviour. In a word, let true righteousness towards men, and real holiness towards God, be your work while ye live; that perfect holiness among men that are good, and eternal happiness in the fruition of God, may be your reward when ye die. For though he hath said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High, yet ye must die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

[1] Baxter's Rest, excellently.

[2] Cyprus famosa divitiis paupertatem populi Rom. ut occuparetur solicitavit.—*Sextus Rufus.*

[3] Plutarch. Pericles, that famous orator, before ever he pleaded, would entreat his God that not a word might fall from him besides his cause.—*Plut. in Vit.*

[4] Jewish Antiq., lib. v. cap. 6. Plato, in his sixth lib., De Legibus, would have the palaces of princes joined unto temples.

THE BEAUTY OF MAGISTRACY.

By THOMAS HALL, B.D.

[*This Treatise, or Exposition, is inserted among* SWINNOCK'S WORKS, *because it is contained in the original edition of them, and it is desired that this reprint should not contain less than that edition contains.*—ED.]

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To all the pious, prudent, zealous, and magnanimous, Magistrates, Judges, Justices, and Gentry, in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Grace and peace; preservation here, and happiness for ever.

My Lords and Gentlemen,—The dedication of this treatise was intended for the Parliament, but that being dissolved, it most properly falls to you, who are, under God, the pillars of the state. Such is the corruption of the times we live in, that we are put to dispute every inch of ground with the enemies of truth,—magistracy, ministry, Sabbaths, sacraments, Trinity, Scriptures, &c., all things are now questioned, nothing believed or practised by many. Formerly I have vindicated baptism, learning, and the ministry, now I am come to a vindication of the magistracy. Many are the affronts and discouragements which faithful magistrates meet with from an ungrateful world, as well as ministers.[1] You are now cried down by those levelling libertines, the fifth monarch-men, as antichristian and beasts, by those brutish men, Jude 10, as well as we. These are their words: The beast and false prophet are the wicked, bloody, antichristian magistracy, ministry, and lawyers.[2] We are all here shipped together in the same bottom, and must sink or swim together, when these monsters of Munster reign. One while we are troubled with church-levellers, and anon with state-levellers; but God hath, and will level all such as go about to level his ordinances, and to destroy that order which he hath set up in the world, as you may see in the treatise itself.

[1] Satan planteth his strongest batteries against the royal forts of magistracy and ministry; whoever are spared, David and Peter shall be sifted, knowing that he gains a double advantage by their miscarriage—viz., example and scandal, by which two wings it will soar higher, and fly much further.—*Swinnock.*

[2] *Vide* Standard of the Fifth Monarch-men, p. 20.

The sons of Belial may as soon pull the stars out of the firmament, as totally root up magistracy and ministry. They are the two great standing ordinances of God, which must stand so long as the world stands, Mat. xxviii. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 24. They are the pillars of church and state; they are like the two pillars in the porch of Solomon's temple, called Jachin and Boaz, *i.e.*, straightness and strength, 1 Kings vii. 21.[1] These are two special properties of a good pillar, it must be straight and strong; and when superiors are such, then are they supporters indeed, Ps. lxxv. 3; Gal. ii. 9. The Hebrews have a saying, that the world is upheld by three things—viz., by justice, religion, and gratitude; and when these three fail, the world, say they, decays. But a better than they hath told us, that when the judge and the prophet are taken away, then comes confusion and ruin, Isa. iii. 2, 5.[2] When Samson would destroy the Philistines, he took hold on the two pillars, and brought the house upon their heads, Judges xvi. 25–27. Take away these two pillars of magistracy and ministry, and you destroy both church and state.

The devil bears an inveterate hatred against these; they are the two butts that he specially shoots at, because by them God doth especially batter his kingdom.[3] Where Moses and Aaron, the word and the sword, go hand in hand together, there Satan's kingdom falls like lightning from heaven, suddenly, universally, and irresistibly. I have experimentally found a greater visible reformation in one year, when we had an active, prudent, pious justice in the parish,[4] than in twenty before, notwithstanding all my preaching and assisting of the officers.

There should, therefore, be a sweet harmony and mutual assistance between magistrates and ministers, since the one helps to uphold the other, and they are ordained by God for the mutual aid of each other. The minister wants the aid of the magistrate in temporals, and the magistrate wants the minister's aid in spiritual and eternal blessings. The minister hath need of the magistrate's sword to defend him against unreasonable men, and the magistrate hath

[1] Nec Hesperum, nec Luciferum, formosiorem esse justitia, dixit Aristoteles. Non est major thesaurus, non eleemosyna opulentior, non bonum excellentius, non res hominibus utilior, post ipsum verbi ministerium, quam magistratus suum facientes officium.—*Luther.*

[2] Necessariæ res sunt in republica bene munitæ arces, muri, turres et arma; at nihil sunt hæc præsidia præ uno pio principe, publicæ pacis studioso.—*Luther.*

[3] Pius et magnanimus magistratus est vere Gygas, qui conatibus improborum se audet opponere; hic enim non Hectorem, non Achillem, sed ipsum prosternit Satanam.—*Luther in Ps.* lxxxii.

[4] Col. Greavis.

need of the minister's aid to maintain his authority in the consciences of men, Titus iii. 1. This made a learned magistrate to say, Were it but for ourselves, viz., for the upholding of magistracy, we had need to uphold the ministry. It is state policy and church policy so to do; for without ministers men may live commodiously, but not piously; and without magistrates men may live piously, but not peaceably and commodiously. Like stones in an arch, these two help to uphold each other. Hence good Jehoshaphat joined princes and Levites together, the better to promote and countenance religion in the land, 2 Chron. xvii. 8. It is a great mercy to magistrates when they have good ministers to assist and instruct them; it makes them prosper, as king Uzziah did when he had a good Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God, to counsel him, 2 Chron. xxvi. 3–5, 7, 8. Hence it is that David had his seers, Asa his Azariah, Jehoshaphat his Jehu, Hezekiah his Isaiah, Josiah his Huldah, and Zerubbabel his Joshua. These are, or at leastwise ought to be, the magistrate's best friends; by their praying, preaching, and example, they help to keep off sin and judgment from a land. Hence it is that the prophet Nathan is called the friend of David, 1 Kings iv. 5; and Jehoshaphat calls the Levites his sons, 2 Chron. xxix. 11; and King Joash calls Elisha his father, as King Joram had done before him, 2 Kings vi. 22, and xiii. 14. Such reverence did the great ones of the world of old shew to God's ambassadors. In the late troubles, we see how those places that had faithful ministers to instruct them, were ready to venture their lives and estates for the public good, when the ignorant Welsh and Irish, and those dark corners of the earth, were habitations of cruelty. An untaught people are always an untoward people. Let there be no dissension then between us, for we are brethren. *Si collidimur, frangimur;* if we dash one against another, we destroy one another. Let there be no interfering or encroaching on each other's offices; but let each keep within the bounds of that sphere and station, wherein his God hath set him. Magistracy and ministry are two distinct callings, as I have shewed in the treatise itself.[1]

And since the discouragements are many which magistrates meet withal in the faithful discharge of their duty, I have therefore set before you the dignity of your calling, and shewed how sensible

[1] Magistratus est ordinatio Dei Creatoris, et ad omne genus hominum spectat; sed ministerium ecclesiasticum est donum et ordinatio Christi Mediatoris, ideoque non proprie et jure ordinario spectat nisi ad illos qui de ecclesia Christi.—*Ames. Medul.*, lib. ii. cap. 17, sec. 48.

God is of any indignities that are done unto you. Yet, lest any should be puffed up with his honours, the Holy Ghost presently adds the mortality of magistrates, and tells them, though they be earthly gods, yet they must die like men; and though they have been judges of the world, yet at last they must be judged themselves; and lest any should pretend ignorance of their duty, in this psalm, which I may fitly call the magistrates' directory, is set forth, 1. Negatively, what magistrates must not do; 2. Affirmatively, what they ought to do, with many reasons dispersed through the psalm to quicken them to their duty. So that I do not know a more lively psalm for this purpose, all things considered, in the whole Book of Psalms; so sharp and searching it is, that the bare singing of it at Westminster, the Sabbath before the judges were to vote concerning ship-money, brought the man into question that caused it to be sung; and yet the psalm was composed, as the learned conceive, that it might be sung either at the creation of new magistrates, or else before the old ones, before they went to the judgment-seat.

I have the rather been induced to this work, because I have observed that such as rulers are, such usually are the people;[1] if they be erroneous, the people will quickly follow them: Isa. iii. 12, 'O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err.'[2] One sinner, especially in authority, destroys much good, Eccles. ix. 18. One Rehoboam, Ahab, Jeroboam, falling from God, and setting up idolatry, will quickly draw all Israel with them, 1 Kings xii. 28, 30; 2 Chron. xii. 1. 'The wicked walk on every side, (in great numbers and swarms,) when the vilest men are exalted,' Ps. xii. 8. The more potent the sinner, the more mischief he doth;[3] they have greater power and more able instruments at hand to promote their projects and wicked designs. The great red dragon that hath seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns, *i.e.*, that hath great potentates to act for him, draweth the third part of the stars down, and casteth them to the earth, Rev. xii. 4—*i.e.*, teachers, and such as by profession did shine like stars, yet by the tyrannical persecution of those great ones were drawn to idolatry. Great men's lives are poor men's laws; they are the looking-glasses by which inferiors ofttimes dress themselves. All their actions are examples, and their examples have a kind of compulsive power. Hence Peter is

[1] Quales in republica principes, tales reliquos solere esse cives, dixit Cicero.

[2] Malorum principium sunt mali principes.—*Emman. Thesaurus.* Though virtue be more amiable, yet vice is more imitable, especially in a prince.

[3] Magnorum hominum mediocria non sunt peccata.—*Luther.*

said to compel them whom by his example he drew to Judaism, Gal. ii. 24. What we see sinks deeper into us than what we hear.[1] On the contrary, when great men are good men, they do much good. If Asa and Hezekiah be forward in reforming, so are the people, 2 Chron. xv. 9–12, and xxxi. 1. When certain ambassadors praised the Lacedæmonian soldiers for their good order, who before were mutinous, one of them ingenuously answered, *Nos iidem sumus ut nuper, sed alius nunc nobis est dux*, We are the same men still, but now we have another general. This is the very end why God advanceth any to honour, that so they might honour him, Esther iv. 14.

It was Vespasian's honour that his greatness became more advantageous to him in the promoting of goodness.[2] To encourage you, know, that if you build God's house, he will build your houses, Exod. i. 20, 21; if you advance his name, he will advance your names, and if you honour him, you shall be honoured by him. We see in all ages how reforming princes have prospered, as Moses, Joshua, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 2–8.[3] What made Queen Elizabeth flourish? Why, she was happy in her counsellors, by whom she was for the most part ruled, and so grew amiable to her friends, and terrible to her foes. 'Wisdom is better than strength, or weapons of war,' Eccles. ix. 18. *Romani cedendo vincunt.* The welfare of a state is preserved, not so much by a multitude of warriors, as of wise and pious counsellors.[4] Many soldiers think it needless to guard those who have the long sword to guard themselves; but let such know, that he is but sorrily guarded who hath himself only, and a few fellow-creatures, for his guardians.[5] If God be against you, what good can your long sword do you? Ezek. iii. 3, 26. Piety and integrity are the best guardians.

2. Encourage a learned, pious, and laborious ministry. To this end improve your interest for the buying in of impropriations, that so every congregation may have an able pastor; for we see by daily experience that scandalous means breeds scandalous ministers.

[1] Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,
Quam quæ sunt oculis commissa.—*Horat.*

[2] Nec quicquam in te mutavit fortunæ amplitudo, nisi ut prodesse tantundem posses et velles.—*Plin. Epis. ad Vespas.*

[3] See Mr Woodward's chronicle of the good kings of Judah. Princeps religionem roborando, ab ea roboratur.—*Nazianz.*

[4] It was a foul blot upon Chilperick, a king of France, that he was *titularis non tutelaris rex; defuit non præfuit Reipublicæ.*

[5] Optimum munimentum est munimento carere.

Tithes are no burden to any but such as esteem the faithful dispensing of the gospel a burden; but for men to plough and sow for such as are truly impropriators, is a great grievance through the land. How many steal the goose and stick down a feather? swallow a hundred pound per annum, and allow the minister four pound per annum? The blood of souls cries against such men: and if the blood of Abel's body cried so loud against Cain, how loud will the blood of so many souls cry against these sacrilegious Canaanites? The abolishing also of that clause in 31 Henry VIII., 13, which exempts many great livings from paying of tithes, because they paid none in the times of abbots and friars, were a very noble work, and well beseeming a parliament; for by this means a great part of many parishes pay nothing towards the maintenance of the gospel, and the burden lies upon a few tenants and inferior persons, who sometimes pay fifty shillings, whilst the lord of the manor pays not five pence. How many patrons of churches are latrons, robbing their ministers, whom they are bound to defend!

3. If ever the Lord shall call you to parliament again, labour to find out some expedient for an accommodation and the reconciling of God's people amongst themselves.[1] Unity and unanimity in God's worship, which some look upon as a misery, is indeed a great mercy, and is enjoined by the apostle as a special duty, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Be of one mind,—*q.d.*, Though there have been divisions and dissensions amongst you, yet now be unanimous, and live in peace together. It is of greater consequence than many imagine. Division in the church breeds dissension in the state, and a state divided cannot long stand.[2] The apostle would never so earnestly have besought, and so strongly adjured God's people to unanimity, had it not been a special duty, Rom. xv. 5; 1 Cor. ii. 20; Phil. ii. 1, 2. The authors and fautors of those sad divisions and subdivisions which abound amongst us, have much to answer for before the Lord. It is easily seen at what door they come in upon us. The best means that I know to suppress exorbitances in the state, is parliaments, and to suppress disorders in the church, is synods. That synods are God's ordinance, and have been blest with success from God, is confessed by all sober men on all hands; and why an ordinance of Christ should lie so long unpractised, I know not.[3]

[1] See motives and directions for an accommodation in D. Bolton's Arraignment of Error, p. 340, *ad finem libri.*

[2] See the dangers of divisions in Mr Clark's tract against Toleration, p. 35, 40, &c.

[3] *Vide* Cotton's Keys, chap. v. p. 25, and Burrough's Irenicum, chap. vii. p. 43, 44; Bolton's Arraignment of Error, p. 266, &c.

How long shall the church of God lie as a field without a fence, and a vineyard without a hedge, so that every wild beast breaks in upon it? For want of discipline, what corruption in manners, and errors in doctrine, like a flood have broken in upon us, and there is none to restrain them! for want of it young ministers begin to degenerate both in their life and doctrine, since they find the reins to lie so loose upon their own necks. The Presbyterian government is that government which by covenant we are bound to promote, it being that government which all the reformed churches of Christ do practise; and the only platform of government which carries a *Jus divinum* in the forehead of it.[1] Let those that can, produce a better platform; that model of our late dissenting anonymous—I shall not say anomalous—brethren, hath made the breach wider than ever; yea, some that wavered in that point, are now convinced of the weakness and insufficiency of their grounds for that way of independency.[2] We have some government in the state, yet church-government and reformation ought to be preferred before that of the state, is proved to my hand by a learned pen.[3] The politicians of the world abuse rulers when they go about to prepossess them with prejudice against the kingdom and discipline of Christ, as if it were destructive to the civil government; whereas if they would but look abroad into the world, they should find that the rulers of the world have not more free, faithful, loyal subjects than those that are truly religious, and willing to submit their necks to Christ's sweet and easy yoke.

4. Restrain that spirit of error and delusion which, like wild-fire, hath spread over all the land.[4] Nothing will please some men but a boundless toleration of all sorts and sects. No magistrate nor minister must control them; all government to such ungoverned ones is tyranny and persecution. How well this toleration agrees with our national covenant, wherein we vowed the extirpation of heresies, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine, let the world judge. It was the great sin of Julian the apostate, that he granted liberty to pagans and heretics, that, by letting such weeds grow, he might the better destroy God's harvest.

[1] See my Comment. on 2 Tim. iii. 8, p. 174, 175, &c.

[2] *Vide* Declaration of the Faith, and Order of the Congregational Churches 1658.

[3] Mr Anthony Burgess' Fast Sermon on Judges vi. 27; preached 1645.

[4] That men should be tolerated to worship the devil, as it is easy to prove the Quakers do, if we consider the men, the matter, and the manner of their speaking, is very sad.

It is charged as a sin upon the church of Thyatira, that she tolerated Jezebel to seduce Christ's people, Rev. ii. 14, 20.[1]

5. It were to be wished that some effectual course were taken for the enjoining of all governors, under a penalty, to send in their children and servants, both publicly and privately, to be catechised. The gross ignorance which still abounds in the body of our people is lamentable. Religion makes the best children, the best servants, and the best subjects; as we see in Abraham's catechised family, how promptly doth every one there perform his duty! It is just with God to suffer inferiors to rebel against their superiors, when they suffer them to rebel against God.

6. It were to be wished that some course might be taken for the better regulating of parishes. It is sad to see how unequally they are divided. In many places one parish comes to another parish church walls, and yet these people belong to another charge, it may be three or four miles off. Parochial assemblies, if they were made more uniform and compact, are best both for pastor and people.[2]

7. Free schools are very much wanting in many parts of the nation. Children are the seminary of the church, and if the seed be naught, the crop cannot be good.

Quest. But where is the means to maintain those schools?

Ans. Since all is devoured, I know but one way that is left, and that is by the improvement of commons and waste lands. They might, if wisely managed by commissioners from parliament—for the curmudgeons of the world will never consent to part with a turf for Christ if they can help it—be improved to ten times the value that now they are at, to the benefit of the parishioners and the advancement of many pious uses.

8. It were to be wished that all market towns that are very populous, and have men fit for government in them, were freely made corporations, and that inferior market towns had a justice of peace either in them, or planted very near them, that the people might not run seven miles to have a swearer, drunkard, or Sabbath-profaner punished. This would prevent abundance of sin which is committed in these places, at markets and fairs especially, for want of justices.

The Lord, the righteous judge of all, direct you by his Spirit, preserve you from sin and error; he fasten you as a nail in a sure place, crown your endeavours with success for the settling of truth

[1] Against toleration, see an elaborate treatise of Mr Clerk, called 'Apples of Gold.'

[2] *Vide* Mr Firmin against Schism, chap. ii. p. 39, &c.

and peace upon firm foundations in this distracted, distressed church and state; he make all mountains a plain before you, that you may be the repairers of out-breaches, and the raisers of the foundations for many generations, that the children unborn, in their generations, may rise up, and call you blessed. This is, and shall be the prayer of your devoted servant in the work of the Lord,

THO. HALL.

KINGSNORTON, *Sept.* 10, 1659.

TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,—Much might be said, and that deservedly, concerning the beauty of this exposition of the 82d Psalm, called by the worthy author 'The Beauty of Magistracy;' it discovering that ordinance of God, magistracy, in its genuine beauty and lustre. As my many occasions would permit, I have perused several parts thereof, and can assure the reader that I find the exposition solid and judicious, the method clear and perspicuous, the style terse and clean, yet grave and theological; the application warm, holy, and proper; the whole learned, gracious, and worthy the eye, love, and practice of a judicious reader who hath the encouragement to peruse it, and also that he may do it with profit, the prayers in his perusing it of his servant in our Lord's work,

W. JENKYN.

Feb. 3, 1659-60.

THE BEAUTY OF MAGISTRACY:

AN EXPOSITION OF PSALM LXXXII.

A PSALM OF ASAPH, OR A PSALM FOR ASAPH.

Ver. 1. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods.*

To speak anything in commendation of the book of Psalms were to pour water into the sea, or to set up a light to the sun. It is so fully done already by others, that I shall only refer you to them, and so pass on.[1]

We read of divers psalms in the book of Psalms which bear the title of Asaph; as Ps. l., lxxiv., lxxv., lxxvi., lxxvii., lxxviii., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxi., lxxxii., lxxxiii. The question is, whether these psalms were written by Asaph, or for Asaph, since the original will bear both.[2] Some conceive that Asaph was the author and inditer of the Psalm, for Asaph was a seer and a prophet, and made psalms as well as David, as appears, 2 Chron. xxix. 30, 'The Levites praised God with the words of David, and Asaph the seer.' Yet the best and most interpreters do conceive that this psalm was made by David, and committed to Asaph as chief singer, or to his sons, who were singers in Israel, 1 Chron. xxv. 2, to be sung for the use of the church of God. Hence the Geneva translation renders

[1] *Vide* Piscator's Preface in his Comment on the Psalms, and Mr Roberts' Key to the Bible, before the Psalms. Psalterium est quædam cælestis sphæra, stellis densa micantibus; est Paradisus animarum, poma continens innumera, quibus mens humana suaviter saginata pinguescit.—*Cassiodorus.*

[2] Duodecim sunt Psalmi qui Asaph inscribuntur.—*A Lap.*, 13. Saith Weemse: *Le Asaph, i.e.*, Asaphi vel Asapho, nam *Le* inservit tum genitivo, tum dativo. ψαλμὸς τῷ Ασαφ, Psalmus ipsi Asapho, *Sept. Versio Arabica.*—*Montan., Scultetus, Piscator.*

it, A Psalm committed to Asaph.[1] That some of those twelve or thirteen psalms which bear Asaph's title, yet were David's psalms, appears by the style of them, and is almost confessed on all hands. Whether this eighty-second Psalm be one of these, let the reader judge.[2] But since David and Asaph were both holy prophets of God, and divinely inspired; and specially since our Saviour himself hath confirmed the divine authority of this psalm, by referring us to it, John x. 36, it is needless to inquire which of them wrote it, since we are assured that it is canonical Scripture.[3]

This psalm may fitly be called the magistrate's psalm, or the magistrate's directory. The matter of it is didactical and doctrinal, setting forth the dignity, duty, and mortality of magistrates and judges, whom the psalmist exhorts to a faithful discharge of their places, by an impartial administration of justice, in punishing the wicked, and defending the good; and this he backs with many weighty arguments.

The first is drawn from the presence of God. He is said, in a more especial manner, to be present and president with these his vicegerents and deputies, ver. 1.

2. From the dignity of their place and calling. They represent the person of God, they bear his name, and are called his sons, and therefore they ought more especially *patrizare*, to resemble their Father in doing justice and judgment.

3. In respect of their mortality. They must die as other men, and come to judgment, and give an account for all that they have done.

4. That his words might have the greater weight, he brings in God himself, expostulating and reasoning the case with those unjust judges, for their abuse of that power which he had given them, ver. 2.

5. He exhorts them to a right performance of their duty, by an impartial dispensing of justice unto all, ver. 3, 4.

6. He aggravates their sin by their sottish ignorance and wilful negligence. They were *lucifugæ*, haters of the light: ver. 5, 'They know not, neither will they understand; yea, they walk on in darkness: albeit the very foundations of the earth be moved,' —*q.d.*, Though all things be in confusion and disorder, and the

[1] It is usual in Scripture to put the head of a family for the family itself, as Aaron for his sons, 1 Chron. xii. 27. Canticum ipsi Asaph traditum ut decantaretur.—*Vatabl.*

[2] Who were the several penmen of the Psalms, you may see in the Exercitations of Weems, Exercit. xviii. p. 166.

[3] In re tam parvi momenti liberum sit cuique judicium.

very pillars of the state shake under them, by reason of their oppression and tyranny, bribery and partiality, yet they would not see it to amend it, but made their lusts their law, to their own confusion.

7. He concludes with prayer, and by an apostrophe turns his speech to God: ver. 8, 'Arise, O God, judge thou the earth,'—*q.d.*, O Lord, I see it is in vain to expect justice from these unjust ones. Do thou therefore, O thou just judge of all the world, arise, and take the matter into thine own hands; execute justice for those that are oppressed; for all the nations of the world are thy proper possession.

Ver. 1. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods.*

They are the words of the prophet, who, like a herald, proclaims the presence of God amongst the gods and judges of the earth. This preface the prophet makes, the better to excite the attention of those great ones, whose corruption, licentiousness, and pride is such, that they think they may act and speak, they may absolve or condemn at their own bar, who please themselves without control. God doth not see, say they, nor will he take notice of our actings. Stay there, saith the prophet, for he sees you, and stands by you too, though you see not him: 'God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods.'

In these words we may observe,

1. The person ruling: God.

2. His posture: he stands.

3. The place where: 'In the congregation of the mighty.' [1]

4. An exegesis or illustration of what he had said before: 'He judgeth amongst the gods.'

1. The person ruling is God, the supreme ruler of the world. Elohim; the word is plural, yet the word that answers it is singular.[2] This notes, say some, a plurality of persons in unity of essence.[3] The Holy Ghost begins the Bible with this plural name of God, joined with a verb singular: Gen. i. 1, '*Elohim Bara*, *Dii creavit*,' *i.e.*, the mighty gods, or all the three persons in the Godhead, created.[4] This is one of the most ancient names of God, and

[1] ἐν ἐγκάτῳ, in intimo.—*Aquila.*

[2] Eloah is the singular number.

[3] See this point fully cleared in those elaborate annotations of Mr Ley on Gen. i. 1.

[4] Verbum singulare simplicissimam Dei essentiam; nomen autem plurale designat tres personas.—*Bucan. loc.*, i. p. 7, ubi plura; Consule *A Lapide in Gen.* i. 1.

the first that is given him in Scripture, Gen. i. 1, 26, iii. 1, and xix. 24. The word is very significant, and notes unto us, that as God is the Creator, governor, and upholder of the world, so he is also the judge and punisher of such as do evil, and the rewarder of such as do well.

2. Here is his posture: 'He standeth;' he doth not sit. Standing is a posture of observation. He standeth to look up, in, and down, as it were, that he may see and hear what every one doth and says. He is always present and president amongst the rulers of the world:[1] 1. Teaching and directing them what they should do; 2. Observing their ways, to see what matters pass, and how they pass; 3. Keeping watch and ward for their defence whilst they rule for him and his. So much the participle of the present tense implies. It notes a continued act, signifying that God is present at all the assizes, sessions, and sittings of magistrates.[2] The same word is used, Isa. iii. 13; the Lord standeth up, or is standing up, to plead; yea, he standeth up to judge the people.

3. Here is the place where he stands: it is in the 'congregation of the mighty.' Some read it thus: God standeth in the assembly of God.[3] Had they said in the assembly of God, the original would bear it, for the word is El, not Elohim, and therefore is rendered by the learned, in the assembly of God.[4] Both translations are right for sense, but the words in the letter run thus: God standeth in the congregation of God, *q.d.*, God standeth in his own assembly, *i.e.*, he is present in the assembly of those judges who are constituted and ordained by him to execute justice and judgment for his people. God delights not in tumultuary routs, or seditious heaps, where there is no law, no rule, no order; but he being the God of order, delights to dwell amongst his people who delight in order, and especially amongst the rulers of his people, who are deputed by him to rule in righteousness.[5]

[1] Stat in omni consessu judicum ut ipsorum Dominus, et judiciorum author.—*Tremel.*

[2] Nitsab, stans, *i.e.*, commoratur ibi.—*Cald. Paraph. Vide* Schools Guard, rule 56: Participia hæc extensa sunt ut loquuntur Scholastici, ideoque, actus continuos denotant, ut Micah vii. 18, Deus est condonans iniquitatem, Christus est ὁ ἀίρων tollens, *i.e.*, ille qui semper tollit peccata mundi.

[3] In cœtu Dei fortis.—*Hieron., Calvin, Tremel.*—*i.e.*, in medio judicum quibus Deus præest, ideoque eorum cœtus cœtus Dei hic appellatur.—*Mus.*

[4] El est nomen Dei quo significatur Deum esse sua essentia fortissimum, immo ipsam fortitudinem, a quo omnis fortitudo emanat.—*Polanus.*

[5] Gnedah, cœtus, conventus, congregatio; significat ordinatam congregationem, qualis est populi qui regitur justis legibus.—*Moller.* Utcunque refulgeat Dei gloria

'He judgeth (or he will judge) amongst the gods.'[1]

These words are exegetical, and help to illustrate what he had said before: 'God standeth in the congregation of God.' What is that? Why he judgeth as supreme amongst the judges of the world. He stands not as a cipher, or a bare spectator, but he himself makes one amongst them.

1. He judgeth actively amongst them.[2] We look upon men, and think the judgment is theirs, but it is God that exerciseth judgment amongst them. He knows the causes, directs the judges, and executes the sentence. Judges are but deputies under God; the work of judging properly and principally belongs unto him, and therefore he is said not only to be amongst them, but in the very midst of them,[3] to let them know that none of their consultations or actings are hid from him.

2. Passively, he is so in the midst of these earthly gods, that if they do unjustly, he will execute justice on them, and judge the judges of the world; for though they be great, yet there is a greater than they, to whom they must shortly give an account.[4]

Quest. Some may demand, Who are meant by gods here?

Ans. By gods here is meant judges and magistrates, as our Saviour interprets it, John x. 34, who are God's lieutenants and vicegerents, appointed in his stead to administer justice to his people.

This title in Scripture is taken three ways:—

1. Primarily and properly.
2. Secondarily and metaphorically.
3. Catachrestically and abusively.

1. This title of God, Elohim, is given primarily, properly, and most truly to God, who is the creator and governor of the world, and in this sense there is but one God, 1 Cor. viii. 6, and besides him there is no Lord, Isa. xliv. 6, and xlv. 22.

in singulis mundi partibus, præcipuum tamen lumen hac in parte emittit, dum legitima gubernatio inter mortales viget.—*Calv.*

[1] Ishpot, judicabit, Heb., *i.e.*, sicut ab initio judicavit, ita et nunc judicat, et semper judicabit.

[2] Shaphat, judicavit, punivit, animadvertit, vindicavit, bonos defendendo, et malos puniendo.—*Leigh.*

[3] Kereb, medium, significat quicquid est propinquissimum et intimum, Gen. xlviii. 16; Ps. v. 9, and xlix. 11.—*Pagnin.*

[4] Elohim judicat, Elohim, *i.e.*, summus et cælestis; Elohim judicat inferiores et terrestres Elohim, quibus divinam suam potestatem regendi et judicandi communicavit.—*A Lapide.* Regum timendorum in proprios greges; Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis.—*Seneca, Trayœd.*

2. Metaphorically and allusively, and so there are gods many, 1 Cor. viii. 5. Thus the holy angels are called Elohim, gods, 2 Sam. xxviii. 13; Zech. xii. 8; Ps. viii. 5; 'thou hast made him a little lower than Elohim,' which the apostle calls angels, Heb. ii. 6, 7; and so Ps. xcvii. 7, 'Worship him, all ye gods,' *i.e.*, all ye angels of God. Now they are called gods, because of all creatures they are the most excellent, and the fairest representations of his majesty, wisdom, and power, being always ready to do his will in defending the godly, and punishing the ungodly.

Some read the text thus: God standeth in the congregation of angels. This is a truth, but not from this text; for the context clearly confutes it: ver. 2, 'How long will ye judge unjustly?' So that it is plain he speaks not of angels, who are perfect, but of men, who may and do err and act unjustly.

(2.) The title is applied to magistrates and judges, Exod. xxi. 6, and xxii. 28; Deut. xix. 7; Ps. lxxxii. 6, and cxxxviii. 1; and lest any should think that this is an Old Testament title only, we find Christ himself making mention of it in the New, John x. 34, 35. Neither is the title given only to one or two, but it is given generally to all magistrates, be they good or bad: ver. 6, 'I have said ye are gods,' *i.e.*, ye are all gods and sons of the Most High; not by regeneration and adoption, but in respect of your profession, and the office which you bear.[1]

Now they are called gods, 1. Not essentially or by nature, for we see they die as other men, but by participation, representation, and office;[2] because they do in a sort participate of God's dignity, authority, and power. As stars borrow their light from the sun, so do rulers their power from God. He hath set them in his place, and therefore he gives them his title, because they are deputies under him to execute justice in the world. There is *Θεῖον τι*, a sparkle of divine majesty, appearing in magistracy; yea, God hath engraven a special note of his own glory and image on them.[3] So that by analogy they may well be called gods, as resembling God, in having the power of life and death in their hand; hence the

[1] Gubernatio est divina quædam virtus, ideoque vocat Deus magistratus omnes, Deos, non propter creationem, sed propter administrationem, quæ est solius Dei: Qui igitur est in regimine, est quasi incarnatus Deus.—*Luther.*

[2] Dii dicuntur participative, nuncupative et analogice, non essentialiter et natura.

[3] Dii vocantur homines admiratione digni, præsertim qui aliis præsunt, ideoque metaphorice propter communicatam a Deo potentiam atque officium aliis opem ferendi, eosque defendendi, sustentandi, fovendi, mundum, regna urbesque regendi. —*Polanus.* Humani Joves.—*Plautus.*

apostle puts an emphasis on this, that they are the ministers of God, and rule for him, Rom. xiii. 4.

(2.) This title is given them, because God is pleased to bestow many excellent and divine gifts of the Spirit on them; hence it is that Moses is called Pharaoh's god, Exod. vii. 1, because God had given him power to speak unto Pharaoh in his name, and to execute vengeance on him. Though all magistrates are not regenerate, yet they may have many excellent, heroic, moral virtues, and common gifts of the Spirit, as justice, prudence, patience, temperance, fortitude, liberality, &c., to fit them for government, Num. vi. 11, 17; 1 Sam. x. 6, 9, 10, and xvi. 13, 14; Acts xiv. 11.

(3.) By deputation from God, whose lieutenants they are, and to whom they must give an account for the maladministration of their office. They derive their power from him, as his delegates, by commission, and so bear the title.

3. The title is used catachrestically and abusively, and so is attributed, (1.) To idols,[1] Gen. xxxi. 32, and xxxv. 2; Exod. xii. 12; Judges xvii. 5; 1 Cor. viii. 5, because idolaters give divine worship to them, though by nature they are no gods, Gal. iv. 8, and therefore the apostle calls them nothing, 1 Cor. viii. 4. An idol is nothing; though materially it is wood and stone, yet formally it is nothing, *i.e.*, it is not that which the idolater conceives it is; it is not God, and there is no holiness in it. Though *κατὰ δόξαν*, in the conceit and corrupt imagination of the idolater, it is a god, yet *κατ' ἀλήθειαν*, and in truth, it is nothing.

(2.) To the devil. He is called the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4, because the wicked of the world obey the devil's will before God's will, and delight to do his works, John viii. 44, and so make him their god. He rules in them, and they readily obey him as their god.[2]

(3.) Anything that a man adores or esteems more than God, that is his god. Thus some men make mammon and riches their god, Job xxxii. 24; others make their belly their god, Phil. iii. 19; Rom. xvi. 18; they are slaves to their epicurean pleasures and lusts, serving them instead of God.[3]

Obs. 1. It is requisite sometimes to preface before we speak, especially when the matter is weighty; it is good to quicken atten-

[1] *Μιμετικῶς* et nomine tenus.

[2] Diabolus non est simpliciter Deus, sed illis est Deus qui illum anteponunt Christo. —*Erasmus.* Diabolus dicitur Deus respectu hominum, tum ratione perversæ opinionis, tum ratione vitiosæ et inordinatæ subjectionis.—*Gerhard.*

[3] Amor tuus Deus tuus; illud est cuique Deus quod maxime colit, cuique totus servit, et sese suaque omnia impendit.

tion by some serious, grave, argumentative, and nervous preface. The psalmist doth so here, ver. 1. There are almost as many arguments as there are words in the verse, proclaiming the majesty, omniscience, and all-seeing eye of God, the better to prepare us for that which followeth in the psalm, wherein are matters of the greatest moment.[1] Thus when the Lord published the Ten Commandments, the better to prepare us for the hearing and obeying of them, he sets a short, but pithy, preface before them: Exod. xx. 2, 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' Every word hath its weight. 1. I am Jehovah, by whom you live, move, and have your being; 2. Thy God, by creation and by covenant; 3. That brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and have delivered thee from a far viler slavery and bondage, even from the slavery of sin and Satan; from the curse of the law, the guilt of sin; from death, hell, and wrath to come. So Christ himself set a preface before the Lord's Prayer, the better to prepare our hearts for the duty, according to that of Solomon, Eccles. v. 2.

Obs. 2. That there is a trinity of persons in the unity of essence. The persons or substances are three, yet the divine essence is but one, being equally communicated to all; hence these three are said to be one,[2] 1 John v. 7; Mat. xxviii. 19; 1 Cor. xii. 4–6, 11, and ii. 13, 14.

Now let all the world dispute and wrangle their hearts out, yet these three or four texts, if there were no more, are sufficient to settle any gracious soul in the truth of this point.

As for those Photinian, Arian, Antitrinitarian, Socinian heretics, which are of late so rife amongst us, who list may see them fully and learnedly confuted in Dr Owen's treatise against Blasphemous Biddle, chap. vii. p. 138; Dr Cheynell in defence of the Trinity; D. Arnoldus contra Socin., cap. i. q. 32, p. 136; D. Prideaux, Lect. xviii. p. 261, fol.; Mr Norton's Orthodox Evangelist, chap. ii. and xxi.

Obs. 3. Our God is the most mighty and powerful God. He is not only El, strong, but Elohim, almighties or all-powers.[3] All the weight and power that is in the creature, it is in him originally, operatively, eminently. His power is like himself, infinite and unspeakable, beyond the tongue's expression, or the heart's imagina-

[1] Quot verba, tot argumenta; quot dictiones, tot stimuli.

[2] *Vide* Rivet in Gen. i. 1, pp. 5, 6.

[3] Elohim est unum e nominibus Dei, a potentia, robore et fortitudine Dei; Deus enim omnia potest.—*Ravanel.* See more, Hierom's Ser. on Exod. xxxiv. 6, on the word El, strong.

tion. This may comfort us in adversity, God is able to raise us and deliver us, Ps. xxxiv. 19. Though our enemies be great, yet our comfort is that there is a greater than they, Job xxxii. 14; Eccles. v. 8; Eph. vi. 9; though we be weak, yet our Redeemer is strong, Jer. l. 33, 34. This upheld those three Chaldean worthies: 'The God whom we serve is able to deliver us,' Dan. iii. 16, 17. God is not only faithful, but almighty and powerful to fulfil all his promises to his people. 2. It must keep us humble in prosperity; for as God hath power to give, so he hath power to take all from us if we abuse it to his dishonour, Hosea ii. 8–13. In his hand is our life, health, wealth, and all that we possess. Whom will we fear, if we fear not him?

Obs. 4. Magistrates must not desire to be solitary and independent. As affectation of independency is an error in the church, so also in the state; hence the Lord tells us here of a senate and assembly of judges. God hath not committed this power to one magistrate, for that would be a burden too heavy even for a Moses alone, Deut. i. 19; but, which is a great mercy, it is committed to many. One man, we say, is no man. Woe to him that is alone, and hath none to counsel him. That which ruined Julius Cæsar, was self-conceitedness, and refusing to consult with the senate.[1] What a sad condition would nations soon be in if they were subject to the will, lust, and tyranny of one single man! It is in the multitude of counsellors that there is safety, Prov. xi. 14. Hence Moses appointed many judges over the people, Exod. xviii. 21, 22; Num. vi. 11, 16, 17; and we read of a senate of seventy elders and senators, which were appointed by God himself to rule the people; and he ordered appeals from inferior courts, to which all cases of difficulty were referred, both in ecclesiastical and civil affairs,[2] Deut. xvii. 8–11; 2 Chron. xix. 8–11. Appeals are *de jure naturæ*, they are founded in nature; even reason tells us that it is unfit that any man should be a judge, witness, and accuser in his own cause; no wise or sober man will desire such independency. Solitary birds are usually birds of prey; but sheep, bees, and doves, which are congregative creatures, are most harmless and innocent.

Obs. 5. Magistracy is God's ordinance. It is no human device or politic invention to keep men in awe, but its original is from

[1] Julius Cæsar nec in dictatura, nec in consulatu consilio senatus usus est, unde se et Rempublicam perdidit. Idem fecit Nero qui senatum capitaliter oderat.—*Sueton.*

[2] Ne unus duntaxat judex ac forum sit, qui statim de quovis negotio ferat ultimam sententiam; a qua provocare non liceat; sed in unaquaque republica plures judiciorum gradus esse oportet, ut sit locus provocationi.—*Plato de Legibus.* lib. vi.

heaven; it is a plant of God's own planting, which shall never be rooted up so long as the world endures, maugre the malice of all fanatic seditious levellers whatsoever. Indeed, when Christ comes to judgment at the end of the world, then, and not till then, he will put down all rule, and all authority and power; for in heaven there will be no need of them, 1 Cor. xv. 24. God is the author, approver, and defender of magistracy; from him they have their mission and commission; all that rule and reign are either *missi*, or *permissi*—either sent by him, 1 Pet. ii. 14, or suffered by him. Usurpers by permission, and lawful governors by commission, from him; the one by his providence and some kind of approbation, the other by his ordinance and appointment; for there is no power but it is of God. The power is his, however men come by it, or however they abuse it; though many have not only acquired it by wicked means, but administered it in a wicked manner, yet still the magistrate's authority, not only abstractly considered in itself, but concretely in the person administering it, is of God, Dan. ii. 21, and iv. 32; John ix. 11; Rom. xiii. 1. The powers that are, they are of God; whether the persons be good or bad, yet the office is from him, and that not only permissive, ordinative, directive; for so sin, sickness, are of God by way of permission, ordering, and directing; but magistracy is of God, *approbativè* and *mandativè*, by way of approbation and command.[1] They bear his name, they wear his livery, they are employed in his work, he takes their account and rewards them; hence it is that in the text their assembly is called God's assembly, and their throne God's throne, 1 Chron. xxix. 23, and their judgment God's judgment, Deut. i. 17; 2 Chron. xix. 6. The judgment is God's, *i.e.*, it is of God, and for God; it is of God in respect of ordination, and for God in respect of administration. Hence the apostle calls the magistrate three times together in express terms, the minister of God, to defend the good, and punish the bad, Rom. xiii. 4–6. This he could not be, had he not his power and authority from God. This made the psalmist to counsel kings and judges not to cast away their office, but to submit to Christ, and serve him in their places of dignity, Ps. ii. 10. He doth not condemn them for being kings and rulers, nor doth he bid them leave their places, but he minds them of their duties; and yet it appears that this psalm was penned for gospel-times, when Christ should have the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his posses-

[1] Permissio notat aliquod indultum, ordinatio vero mandatum; 2. Permissio est eorum quæ displicent et improbantur; ordinatio vero est eorum quæ cum voluntate et approbatione fiunt.—*Baldwin, Oc.*

sion. So that the regulating of magistracy being here enjoined, the establishing hereof is also plainly implied.

Magistracy is very ancient. Murderers and adulterers were to die by law long ago, Gen. ix. 6, and xxxviii. 24; and we read of magistrates all along, as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the judges, the seventy elders, Eli, Samuel, David, Solomon, Josiah, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, &c.; these godly men would never have borne rule if they had ever conceived that the office had been sinful. And lest any should object that these are Old Testament examples, we read also in the New Testament of a nobleman or viceroy that believed,[1] John iv. 46, 50; and Joseph of Arimathea, a senator and honourable counsellor, Mark xv. 43; and of a deputy, proconsul, or proprietor, that was converted to the faith, Acts xiii. 7, 12; and Cornelius, a centurion, Acts x. 1, 2; yet did they not leave their office. The eunuch that was treasurer to the queen Candace, when he became a Christian, yet we do not read that he left his place, Acts viii. 38. Erastus, the chamberlain of Corinth, did not, because he was a Christian, cast off his government, Rom. xvi. 23. So Constantine, Theodosius, and other good men, kept their magistracy still, which they would not have done had it been unlawful.[2]

2. In Scripture we find rules for rulers, Exod. xviii. 21; Deut. i. 16, 17, and xxv. 1; Ps. ii. 10; Rom. xiii. 3, 4. Now these would be in vain if there were no rulers to observe them.

3. God oft sends men to the magistrate for help in their distress, Exod. xxii. 9; Deut. xvii. 8. This God would not do if the office were unlawful.

Object. These are Old Testament proofs. *Ans.* Christ sends us to the magistrate in the New, Mat. v. 25; Luke xii. 58. Paul, when in danger of his life, appeals to the magistrate, which he would not have done had it been a sin.

4. We are commanded to pray for magistrates, Gen. xx. 17, and xlvii. 10; Jer. xxix. 7; 1 Tim. ii. 2; but if their office were evil, we should rather pray against them. Now, we are to pray for nothing but what is good and pleasing unto God.

5. Christ, who is the eternal wisdom of his Father, tells us that it is by him that kings reign and princes decree justice, yea, nobles and all judges of the earth, Prov. viii. 15, 16. Not only superior, but also inferior rules are appointed by Christ. He sets up not only kings, but princes and nobles also; from him they have their ordination, conservation, and qualifications. It is he that gifts them

[1] τὶς βασιλικὸς, regius quidam.—*Beza.*

[2] *Vide* Plura apud Suecanum de magistratu, Pars quinta, p. 594.

with wisdom to make good and just laws, for the benefit and peace of their people; it is he that pulls down one and sets up another in the throne, and none may say unto him, What dost thou? Job ix. 12, xii. 18, and xxxiv. 24.

6. The Lord commands subjects to obey magistrates, and give honour, and pay tribute to them. This certainly implies, by the rule of relatives, that there must be magistrates to whom this honour and tribute is due; and if every soul must be subject to the higher powers, then there must be higher powers, to which men must be subject. This enjoining the duty of the subject, doth establish the authority of the magistrate, for they are co-relatives and individuals.

7. That awe and dread which is in the hearts of men toward magistracy, argues that there is much of God in it.[1] To see so many thousands of men of contrary dispositions, and perverse tempers, yet to live peaceably together under the government of one man, shews plainly that the hand of God is here.

Obj. But some may object, that if God be the author of magistracy, how is it said, Hosea viii. 4, 'They set up kings, but not by me; they made princes, and I knew it not?'

Ans. The answer is easy. They set up kings by God's permission, but not by his approbation. I knew it not, saith God—viz., so as to approve of it.[2] It is true, I let them go on in their own way, but I neither did, nor will take cognisance of what they do, so as to bless them in it. Many a man rules by providence, not by promise. So then God doth not here disclaim the ordinance of magistracy, but the manner of choosing him—viz., in a mutiny, and without any respect to God's will. Thus Jeroboam, of whom it is conceived the prophet Hosea speaks, was chosen king by God, 1 Kings xi. 31, 35, 37, and xii. 15, 24. But the seditious and disorderly manner of choosing him is attributed to the people.

Use. Is magistracy God's ordinance? This then, first of all, shews the vileness of papists, who exalt the pope above the civil magistrate, and give him power over princes, even to deposition, if they please not him. These must hold his basin, bring in his meat, hold his stirrup, lead his horse, yea, be his horses, I might say his asses, to carry him on their shoulders; and yet you must think he is still *Servus servorum*, or rather *Diabolus diabolorum*, the devil in

[1] See eight arguments more to prove the lawfulness of the civil magistrate, in Dr Featly, against the Anabaptists, art vi. pp. 153, 154.

[2] Multa dicuntur non esse a Deo, *i.e.*, eo jubente vel approbante, quæ tamen non sunt sine Deo permittente et permittere volente.—*Rivet.*

his *pontificalibus*.[1] He takes upon him to transfer kingdoms, to excommunicate kings, to depose one and set up another in his stead, and to loose subjects from their oath of allegiance and fidelity. They look upon princes as mere laics and seculars, yea, Bellarmine sticks not to call them, *Mundanos et profanos homines*, profane men, preferring the pope and his shavelings before them.[2] The magistrate must not reform the church, suppress errors, call synods, nor intermeddle with religion. He may indeed defend it, but he must not judge of it, saith Bellarmine.[3] Besides, he exempts his clergy from the civil yoke, when Aaron, the high priest, was obedient to Moses, the magistrate, Exod. iv. 15, and xxxii. 21, and Christ himself paid tribute to Cæsar, and yielded obedience to him in civil things. Besides, the injunction is universal: Rom. xiii. 1, 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,' *i.e.*, every man, even all that have rational souls, must obey. And it is worth observing, that the more holy any have been, the more respectful they have been to magistrates, as we see in Joseph, Nehemiah, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Christ himself, Mat. xvii. 27; John xix. 11; Paul, Acts xxiii. 5; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2; yea, and Peter himself, 1 Pet. ii. 13. It is true, the papists do not in words deny the office of the civil magistrate, as some fanatics do, yet in their works they do very much abuse and abase him, by their distinctions of spiritual and secular, as if none were holy and had the Spirit of God but the clergy, when the Scripture calls all believers spiritual, 1 Cor. ii. 15; Gal. vi. 1; besides, their setting the clergy above them, their exempting them from civil tributes and taxes, their sanctuaries[4] to preserve murderers from the sword of justice, together with their doctrine and practice of king-killing, doth abundantly prove that popery is no friend to magistracy; and that the pope is Antichrist, 'that man of sin, who exalts himself above all that is called God,' and carries himself as God, 2 Thes. ii. 3, 4.

If any would see more against these, let him peruse Paræus in Rom. xiii. 1; Dub. 1; Gerhard, loc. com. de Magistrat, tom. vi. p.

[1] Papa regibus tanquam suis vassallis suæque potestati subjectis imperat, ut etiam possit eos instituere et destituere.—*August. de Ancona, de Ecclesiast. Potest.* q. 46.

[2] *Vide* Bellarm. de Exempt. Cler., cap. 2. Primum locum tenent episcopi, et præcipue Pontifex M. Secundum presbyteri, tertium diaconi aliique ministri ecclesiastici; ultimum laici, inter quos etiam reges et principes numerantur.—*Bellarm. de Laicis*, lib. cap. 3, 17.

[3] See this confuted in Gerhard de Magistrat., tom. vi. p. 305; Rivet. in Exod., p. 1038. Siquis tentat excipere, conatur decipere; si *omnis*, quis vos excepit ab universitate?—*Bernard.*

[4] Against sanctuaries, see Pet. Martyr contra Asyla, Loc. Commun., Classis iv. cap. 15, sec. 33, and Gerhard. de Magistrat., p. 336.

458, 475; Moulin. de Monarchia contra Bellarm. una cum Abboto et Mortono; Willet's Synops. Controvers., vii. p. 361; D. Downam de Antichrist, lib. iv. cap. 23, p. 246; Watson's Quodlibets, p. 119, 283, &c.: Rutherford's Divine Right of Presbytery, part ii. cap. 6, sec. 5, p. 449, 352; Mr Rob. Balfon's Assize Ser. on Prov. xxix. 2, p. 14-32.

2. This cuts down, on the other hand, the Donatists, the Marcionites, the Manichees, who denied the authority of magistrates, together with the Anabaptists,[1] Socinians, Millenaries, and Fifth-Monarchy men,[2] who look and long for the abolishing of all magistracy, that Christ alone might reign amongst the saints for a thousand years. The better an ordinance the more are its enemies; and though some of these in words may speak honourably of magistracy, confessing that God ordained it in the Old Testament, and that it is useful now to keep men in order, and therefore we ought to pay tribute to them; yet what they build with one hand, they presently pull down with the other, affirming that magistracy is an office displeasing unto God, and unlawful for any Christian to bear; they would have a parity and equality amongst Christians; they would have no superiors nor inferiors, but all fellow-creatures well met. As that house is like to be well governed where all are governors, so that state is like to be well ruled where all are rulers; as that body is a monster which is all head, so is that which hath no head. Where all govern there is no government, and where all are head there is no order.

1. These cry down the coercive punishing power of the magistrate, and so make him a mawkin or man of straw, or like a wooden head and golden Neptune fixed on the stern only for a show, but not at all concerned in the steering of the ship.

2. They cry down all swearing before the magistrate.

3. They cry down all going to law before him.

4. They cry down all going to war under him.

5. So long as magistrates please them they will extol them, as the Arminians did in Germany; but let rulers once restrain them in their wicked practices, and then they load them with reproachful titles, as tyrants, persecutors, the powers of darkness, encroachers upon people's liberties, the antichristian beast, it will never be peace

[1] Anabaptistarum error Donatistarum hæreseos rivulus fuit.—*Dancæus.*

[2] Novi Chiliastæ expectant seculum aliquod novissimum, quod vocant Spiritus Sancti, in quo magistratum omnem sperant abolitum iri, et sublatis impiis Christum in his terris visibilem inter pios regnaturum, per mille annorum decursum.—*Gerhard.*

till it be down;[1] yea, and they rise against them, as the Anabaptists in Germany did against their princes.[2] These anarchical ones are men of loose lives, and this brings them to loose opinions, 2 Pet. ii. 10. These lawless ones cannot endure that any should be lords over them, Ps. xii. 4. They vote down laws, magistracy, and ministry, that they may the more freely enjoy their lusts.[3] These are those dreamers that despise government, 2 Pet. ii. 10, and speak evil of dignities, Jude 8–10.[4] It is not the person so much as the office itself that displeaseth these libertines. These overthrow foundations, Ps. xi. 3, and do what in them lies to ruin states and kingdoms. No commonwealth can long subsist without government,[5] Prov. xi. 14. Where there is no pilot the ship miscarrieth, and where there is no counsel the people fall. Even the wiser sort of heathens have extolled government and order as an excellent and divine thing,[6] so that these brutes sin even against natural light. There is a great necessity of order and government for the preservation of human societies;[7] and no man fitter to govern, all things considered, than a Christian. He that hath the knowledge and fear of God before his eyes, is fitter to govern the people of God than he that wants it.

Woe then to those seditious Quakers and profane libertines of our time, the vilest generation of railers and revilers of magistracy and ministry that ever the sun beheld.[8] They pretend to extraordinary sanctity, when they have not ordinary manners nor common civility. If ever there were despisers of dignity and dominion, these are they. In their words and gestures what impudence, insolence, and irreverence do they show. These in God's dictionary are called blasphemers, 2 Pet. ii. 10;[9] blaspheming dignities, *i.e.*, they make it their work and trade to go up and down libelling, mutter, and murmuring against those in authority. If God's Spirit calls rulers gods, we may easily guess what spirit leads those that call them devils.[10] It is dangerous to speak against any of God's ser-

[1] *Vide* The seditious Standard of the Fifth-Monarch men.

[2] *Vide* Sleidan's Commentar., lib. x.

[3] Seductores isti non dominos sed dominatum et ipsum munus a Deo constitutum convitiis incessunt. Sibelius in Judam.

[4] *Vide* Mr Jenkyn on Jude 8, p. 301, 302, folio.

[5] Ubi non est gubernator, corruit populus.—*Vulg.*

[6] Ἄνευ ἀρχόντων ἀδύνατον εἶναι πόλιν.—*Aristot. Polit.*, lib. iv. cap. 4.

[7] Ordo quid aliud est quam series quædam superiorum et inferiorum?

[8] See Mr Baxter's Sheet against the Quakers, p. 4.

[9] Βλασφημοῦντες, blasphemantes eos.

[10] As Caligula was composed of impudency, so are these of turbulency. Se nihil

vants, and especially against his servant Moses, Num. xii. 8. Reviling of judges is expressly forbidden, Exod. xxii. 28, and therefore Paul takes up himself with an 'I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest,' Acts xxiii. 5. And if the angel would not revile the devil, much less may we revile magistrates, Jude 8, 9. It was a good saying of Memnon, a commander under the king of Persia, when he had hired a soldier to fight against Alexander; the man began to revile Alexander. Friend, said Memnon, I hired you to fight against Alexander, and not to rail on him.[1] These, like beasts, bite the hand that feeds them, and crop the tree that shelters them. They cannot escape the revenging hand of God. Miriam, for speaking against Moses, became a leper, Num. xii. 10. Corah and his company that rose against Moses, the earth devoured them alive, Num. xvi. Rebellious Absalom was hanged in an oak, and perfidious Ahithophel hangs himself. The end of Shimei and Sheba was miserable; and Zimri had no peace that slew his master.[2] The opposers of lawful magistracy shall find their calamities to arise suddenly, Prov. xxiv. 22; he that breaketh this hedge a serpent shall bite him,[3] Eccles. x. 8. As God is the author, so he is the lover, preserver, and vindicator of his own ordinance, and he will not suffer the violators of government to escape unpunished, as we see by the experience of so many thousand years. How many have still been heaving at it, and yet this rock abides! They thought to have overthrown it, but they have overthrown themselves. The calling is God's ordinance, the persons are designed by his providence, and the work concerns his glory, and therefore God looks upon himself as deeply concerned in their quarrel, and takes the despite that is done to them as done to himself, Exod. xvi. 8; 1 Sam. viii. 7. He will resist those that resist his ordinance, and rise against those that rise against his vicegerents. Never yet any hardened himself against God and prospered. Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, but woe to him that striveth with his maker, Isa. xlv. 11. Though the sons of Zeruiah may be too strong for David, yet they are not too strong for the God of David; though they be mighty, yet God is almighty, and will reward such evil-doers according to their wickedness, 2 Sam. iii. 39.

magis in natura sua laudare ac probare dixit Caligula, quam ἀδιατρεψίαν, *i.e.*, impudentiam.—*Sueton.*

[1] Ego te posco ut pugnes contra Alexandrum, non ut illi maledicas.—*Plutarch in Apotheg.*

[2] See God's Judgments on such in the Theatre of God's Judgments, lib. ii. cap. 2, p. 158, folio. *Vide* Mr Jenkyn on Jude 3, p. 298, folio.

[3] See the Large Annot. on Eccles. x. 8.

An answer to the cavils of Anabaptists, libertines, &c.

Obj. 1. It is against Christian liberty for Christians to be under the power of any but Christ, who is our only king, and hath made us free, John viii. 32; Gal. v. 1. It is a sore slavery to have magistrates and laws to rule over us, since in Christ all are equal, Gal. iii. 28, and there is no distinction of superiors and inferiors, of rulers and ruled.

Ans. This is the grand objection, the great Goliath, their darling; liberty, liberty, liberty. Overthrow this, and you overthrow all.

1. I answer, Civil subjection to superiors may well stand with spiritual liberty; for spiritual privileges do not abrogate, but rather confirm our obedience to them. Paul, that had so fully discoursed of Christian liberty, yet oft enjoins obedience to magistracy, Rom. xiii. 1, &c.; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. So doth Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 16. Had this subjection been opposite to our Christian liberty, Christ would never have paid tribute to Cæsar, nor have commanded us to give unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's.[1] Gospel liberty is a liberty from sin, 2 Cor. iii. 17, not to sin; a liberty to serve God, and not to despise the ministers of God. Christ never purchased a liberty for us to live as we list, and hold what we list; to be Arians, Arminians, Socinians, &c. This is libertinism, and not spiritual liberty.

2. Though believers, as they are in Christ, are all one and equal, yet considered as they are members of a politic body, and in civil respects, so there is an inequality: and though Christ hath freed us from the curse of the law, from the traditions of men, 1 Cor. vii. 23, and from the tyranny of sin and Satan, yet he hath not freed us from subjection to men, according to those ranks and callings he hath set us in; and therefore, even in gospel times, we read of superiors and inferiors, of masters and servants, with directions how they should walk, and promises of reward to such as faithfully perform the duties of their places, 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22; Eph. vi. 5–9; so that magistracy is so far from hindering true Christian liberty, that it helps to suppress sin, and to make us free indeed. Neither is a politic inequality against a spiritual equality. Onesimus was as good a man as Philemon, yet for all that Onesimus was Philemon's servant.

[1] Sunt tumultuosi spiritus qui regnum Christi non bene extolli credunt, nisi aboleantur omnes terrenæ potestates; nec libertate per se data frui, nisi quodvis humanæ servitutis jugum excusserint.—*Calvin in Rom.* xiii. 1.

3. The Scripture speaks of magistracy as a great mercy, and not as a misery or burden to a people; it calls them nursing fathers, shields, shepherds, &c., and the loss of them is reckoned as a sore judgment, Isa. iii. 1–5, and the restoring of them as a great mercy, Isa. i. 26, 'I will restore thy judges as at the first;' 2 Chron. ix. 8, it is made a sign of God's love to a people. Let wicked men and sons of Belial call government bonds and burdens, Ps. ii. 3, yet believers, of all men, should be the most obedient to magistrates, whether they be good or bad, in all lawful things, of any people in the world, that so they may stop the mouths of gainsayers, and all the world may see that rulers have no better friends than such as make conscience of their ways; for none can be truly loyal but such as are truly religious.[1]

4. Though Christ be the sole king of his church, yet is he not the sole king in his church; for Christ's kingdom doth not oppose, but confirm the magistrates; they are not contrary, but may well subsist together. The gospel doth not abolish, but establish the civil government of the world, and makes it better. Neither is our civil subjection to earthly kings any hindrance of our obedience to our heavenly King, but doth rather evidence and confirm it.[2] Christ was king of his church in the Old Testament; he was the same yesterday that he is to-day, and yet he had magistrates under him then, and why not now? Yea, he promiseth magistracy as a blessing in gospel times, Isa. xlix. 22, 23; Rev. xxi. 24.

Obj. 2. God's people are a holy, obedient, willing people, and a law to themselves; but the law is made for unholy and disordered ones, 1 Tim. i. 9.

Ans. Be you never so holy, you must obey. God will have every soul, be they never so holy or righteous in their own eyes, to be subject to the higher powers. In the church of Rome there were many saints, and yet the apostle commands them all to submit, in civil things, to the magistrates of those times, who were professed heathens and tyrants.[3]

2. The best are flesh as well as spirit, as we see in Noah, Lot, David; and if there were not a law without to restrain, as well as a light within, we know not how far the best may fall; for though

[1] See more in my Comment. on 2 Tim. iii. 2, pp. 31, 32.

[2] Subordinata non pugnant; nam in ecclesia reges Christo summo regi inserviunt, proinde Christus Deum et Cæsarem non opponit sed conjungit, Mat. xxii. 21; *Dithmar.* See more in Dr Taylor on Tit. iii. 1, p. 544.

[3] Jus divinum quod est ex gratia, non tollit jus humanum quod est ex jure naturali.—*Aquinas*, 22æ, q. 10, art. 10.

the just be a law to themselves, yet they have lusts still within themselves which many times call for coercion and correction from the magistrate. A good man saith, as the martyr said once at the stake, when they went to bind him to the stake: That needs not, said the martyr; yet since I am flesh as well as spirit, you may bind me if you please. So a good man, though he hath God's law within his heart, and he delights to do his will, and so need the less binding, yet since he knows the rebellion of the flesh, and the deceit of his own heart, he desires as many restraints as may be, to hedge up his way, and keep him from sinning against God.

3. Though God's people be holy and obedient, yet they are mixed amongst the wicked, and so have great need of the magistrate's sword to defend them from the violence of unreasonable men, 1 Tim. ii. 2. So that albeit good men should do no evil themselves—though we see doves many times, and sheep, fight one with another, and have need of some to part them—yet they may quickly suffer evil, if the magistrate and his laws do not protect them.

4. Though the law be not made for the condemnation of the righteous, yet it is ordained for a rule to direct and guide him. This law he cheerfully obeys, because it confines him to live in that element where he would live, as if one should be confined to paradise where he would be, though there were no law to confine him to it. So, then, the magistrate is not a terror to him, because he doth well, and doth spontaneously obey his laws.

Obj. 3. God forbids the killing of men, and saith he that takes the sword shall perish by the sword, Mat. xxvi. 52; and hath promised that in gospel times they shall not hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain, Isa. xi. 9, and lx. 18. Hence the Socinians and gross Anabaptists gather that offenders now must not be put to death.

Ans. 1. God forbids any private person to kill, or to take up the sword by way of private revenge, without a call;[1] but what is this to the magistrate, who is a public person, and executes the judgment of God on sinners, as his vicegerent, and commissionated from him so to do? for he is the minister of God for wrath to them that do ill. It is his glory to cut off the wicked from God's city, and he hath many commands so to do, Gen. ix. 6; Exod. xxi. 14; Num. xxxv. 30–34; Mat. v. 21, 22; Rom. xiii. 4; Rev. xiii. 10. So that those who would have guilty persons spared, they dispute not

[1] Occidere hominem non semper est criminosum, sed malitia non legibus occidere criminosum.—*Dancæus.* Magistratus non sunt homicidæ, sed malicidæ.—*Bernard.*

against us, but God, who hath commanded that blasphemous and notorious sinners should be cut off.

2. That text speaks of gospel converts, not of magistrates, and shews the sweet peace and amity that in those days shall be amongst believers.

Obj. 4. The Lord was angry with the Israelites because they asked for a king, 1 Sam. viii. 6, 7; *ergo*, kingly government is unlawful.

Ans. Non sequitur; for the Lord was not angry with them simply and absolutely for asking a king[1]—for monarchy is not in itself displeasing to God, as we see in David, Hezekiah, Josiah, &c.—but for desiring to have a king out of an affectation of novelty, being weary of that government which God had established, and desirous to be in fashion like the Egyptians, Medes, Persians, Chaldeans, and other heathenish idolaters round about them, vers. 5 and 20, and out of ambition and confidence in a king as able to protect them, and diffidence in God as unable to defend them in his own way.[2] He was also angry with them for their ingratitude toward holy and industrious Samuel, who had deserved so well of them, having spent himself wholly in their service.[3]

2. The Lord himself elected Saul to be king over his people, and qualified him for his office, and expressly commanded Samuel to anoint him king over Israel; which he would not have done had that office in itself been displeasing to him.

3. We may retort this place on the Anabaptists themselves: seeing the Israelites here, in rejecting Samuel, are said to reject God, it hence appears that magistracy is God's ordinance, which, whosoever opposeth, that man opposeth not men, but God.

Obj. 5. We may not resist nor render evil for evil, Mat. v. 39; Rom. xii. 17.

Ans. These places condemn not ordinate and public revenge, which God hath committed to the magistrate, who for good ends, and without any hatred to the person of any, is to do justice on them. So that albeit I may not offend others, yet I may defend myself, and crave the magistrate's help, who by office is bound to execute justice on evil-doers.

2. If they stick to the letter of the text, this will take away the

[1] Est fallacia a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter.

[2] Peccaverunt quia petunt regem inconsulto, immo invito Deo; Deus enim instituerat judicum aristocratiam; hanc ergo ipsi in monarchiam mutare non debebant, nisi volente et mutante Deo.—*A Lapide.*

[3] See more in the Large Annotations; and Weems, vol. iii., chap. iii., pp. 2, 12, &c.

power of parents and masters, for they, in their places, do resist evils and punish offenders.

Obj. 6. We are forbidden to judge, Mat. vii. 1; Rom. xiv. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 5.

Ans. These places condemn rash, private, uncharitable, and unseasonable judging;[1] they do not condemn public, political, or ecclesiastical judging.

Obj. 7. Magistracy belonged to the Jews, who were children, Gal. iv. 1, and not to Christians, who are grown to perfection.

Ans. 1. Magistracy belonged to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, as appears by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, Augustus, &c.

Ans. 2. Christ himself approved of magistracy in gospel times; and the prophecies of gospel times show that kings should be servants to Christ and his church, Ps. ii. 10, 11, and lxxii. 11; Isa. xlix. 22, 23, and lx. 3, 10, 11, 16; Rev. xxi. 24. Even the holy city that comes from heaven yet shall have kings to rule in it and defend it.

Ans. 3. The world is now fuller of people, and more wicked—all circumstances of light and privileges considered—than in the Jewish times; and therefore, if they had need of magistrates to suppress sin, and preserve God's people in peace, much more have we. The devil is as busy, yea, more busy, now than ever, and his agents as active to seduce us as ever they were amongst the Jews.

Ans. 4. If man in the state of innocency should have had a paternal and lovely, not lordly, subordination and order, surely we have more need of it in this state of apostasy;[2] and those that talk so much of perfection, show no such perfection but that magistrates are needful to make them better. Men are more perfect sinners now, sinning against greater light and greater love than ever.[3] These, under pretence of perfection, bring in confusion; and if the apostolical churches, that had such an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, had yet need of magistrates, and are oft commanded to obey them, Rom. xiii.; Titus iii. 1, 2; then it savours strongly of pride and self-conceitedness for any in our days to think themselves more perfect than those primitive Christians.

[1] Est fallacia a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter.

[2] *Vide* Rivet. in Gen. i. Exercit. 10, *in fine.*

[3] Dum fanatici Anabaptistæ perfectionem jactant, rerum omnium confusionem inducunt, et perfectionis colore totum Christianum orbem nituntur evertere.—*Zepper. de Legib. Mos.*, lib. ii. cap. 5.

Obj. 8. 'There is but one Lord,' Eph. iv. 5, 'and no man can serve two masters.'

Ans. 1. Though there be but one primary, principal, absolute Lord and Judge, yet there are many subordinate ones.

Ans. 2. Our Saviour doth not simply say that no man can serve two masters, but, as the context shows, he speaks of serving two contrary masters—such as God and mammon—which command contrary things, and have contrary ways, ends, and principles; no man can serve two such contrary masters. But Christ and magistracy are not contrary, but subordinate, and therefore the magistrate is called his minister for our good.

Obj. 9. Most magistrates are corrupt and wicked; of all the kings of Israel, there were not past four that were good. They are most of them tyrants and oppressors; they are briars and brambles, not olives and vines, that seek for kingdoms, Judges ix. *Ergo*, down with them all!

Ans. 1. This is like anabaptistical logic. Because some abuse meat, drink, light, money, clothes, &c., *ergo*, away with them all.[1] Who knows not that the abuse of a thing must not take away the use of it? Though the person may be bad, yet the office is good.[2] Judas was bad, yet the apostolical office was good. *A persona ad rem non valet argumentum. Vitium personæ non vitiat officium.*

Ans. 2. As for that place, Judges ix.: 1. It is allegorical, and so but a sorry foundation to build an argument upon. 2. It speaks not against magistracy in general, but against Abimelech, who usurped the kingdom, ver. 1.

Obj. 10. 2 Cor. x. 4, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal;' *ergo*, the sword of the magistrate is useless.

Ans. Non sequitur, for the apostle doth not speak there of magistracy, but of the ministry: *q.d.*, The weapons of our warfare who are in the ministry are spiritual, not carnal. We do not look to prevail by eloquence and fine speeches, by flattery and dissimulation, or by worldly force and power, but by the mighty power of the gospel, which is able, through the help of God, to pull down the strongest hold of flesh and blood.

Obj. 11. John viii., Our Saviour would not punish the woman taken in adultery; *ergo*, the magistrate must not punish offenders.

Ans. Non sequitur, It was the magistrate's duty to punish such;

[1] Est fallacia accidentis.

[2] Magistratus essentialiter, intrinsice, et per se bonus est; per accidens, abusive, et vitio personæ, malus.

but Christ, having no commission to meddle with the sword, let her go. But of this elsewhere.[1]

Obj. 12. The magistrate is called a human ordinance,[2] 1 Pet. ii. 13; *ergo*, it may be pulled down by man.

Ans. Non sequitur, for magistracy is called the ordinance of man,[3] or an human creation, not because it was invented by man, or hath its original from him; for all power is from God. Though men may choose the man, yet it is God that confers the power, and commands us to obey him for his sake, *i.e.*, because it is his will to govern us by such. But it is called the ordinance of man, 1. *Subjectivè*, Because it is seated in man, and is managed by him; and the choice of the kinds of magistrates is, for the most part, left unto men, to choose what form of government is most commodious for them, that so they might more willingly yield obedience to them; hence some have kings, some consuls, some protectors, some emperors. Now, second causes do not exclude, but include the first: though men choose mediately, yet God orders and disposeth all by his overruling power to his own praise; so that, in respect of their original appointment and institution, they are an ordinance of God. 2. *Objectivè*, Because it handleth human affairs. 3. *Finaliter*, In respect of its end, it was ordained for the benefit of man, and for the preservation of human society.[4]

Obj. 13. Rev. iv. 10, 11, 'The twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne;' *ergo*, Magistrates, when they are converted to Christianity, must cast away their crowns.

Ans. 1. Anabaptistic logic still! The text is a vision, and arguments grounded on visions are very weak, and seldom demonstrative.[5]

Ans. 2. The text doth not speak of magistrates, but of the whole church triumphant, represented here by the twenty-four elders; for, as the twelve patriarchs in the Old Testament were, as it were, the root of the Israelitish church, so the twelve apostles, by their

[1] See my Commentary on 2 Tim. iii. 3, pp. 103, 104, where this text is fully vindicated.

[2] Ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσις, humana creatio.

[3] Κτίσεως appellatio ad Deum primum authorem nos revocat; etsi enim magistratus creari—*i.e.*, ordinari etiam ab hominibus dicuntur; primus tamen eorum creator proprie est solus Deus, cui primitus omnis creatio competit.—*Sibelius.* The substance of the power is of God, but the specification of the circumstances in respect of place, person, title, continuance, customs, &c., is of man.—*D. Sanderson ad Magistrat.*, p. 183. Regimen ipsum est juris divini; at determinatio ejus ad certam formam monarchiæ vel aristocratiæ pertinet ad jus gentium.

[4] See more, *Lex Rex*, pp. 8, 9.

[5] Theologia symbolica non est argumentativa.

doctrine were, as it were, the foundation and original of the Christian church, who cast their crowns before the throne, acknowledging all they have to be of free grace and mercy, not merit.[1]

Ans. 3. Suppose it did speak of the Christian magistrate, yet the sense of the place would amount but to this: That since magistrates have received their honour and dignity from Christ, therefore they lay all at his feet again, giving all the praise of what they are and have to him who was the donor of them.

Use 2. Is magistracy God's ordinance? Then it will necessarily follow that a Christian may, with a safe conscience, undertake that office when called to it. That order which is just, holy, and good, must needs be pleasing unto God, and so may safely be undertaken by good men; but magistracy, being God's ordinance, must needs be so; for all God's works and ordinances are honourable and glorious, and do ennoble, not debase the creature, Ps. cxi. 3. As the ministry is God's ordinance, and marriage is God's ordinance, so they are pure and good, and a man may live in those conditions with a pure conscience, pleasing to God: so *à pari*, for the same reason, since magistracy is God's ordinance, a Christian may lead a life pleasing to God in that office. And the examples of all those good men that, in the Old and New Testament, have borne that office, as I have showed before, and have been high in God's favour, shows plainly that the office may be undertaken by pious men.

2. That which God hath promised as a choice mercy to his people in gospel times, the administration of that cannot be unlawful; but such is magistracy, as hath been fully proved before.

3. Is magistracy God's ordinance? Then none may usurp it, or enter upon it without a call from him.[2] As in the ministry no man may take that honour to himself, but he that is called; so in the magistracy none may assume this office to himself, but he that is called of God, either mediately or immediately, ordinarily or extraordinarily. As no man can preach *jure* and

[1] Ad literam loquitur de primariis, immo de omnibus, sanctis utriusque Testamenti, qui jam beati in cælo vident, adorant et celebrant Deum.—*A Lapide.* Coronas suas ante thronum mittere, est certaminum suorum victorias non sibi tribuere, sed Deo, ut ad illum referant gloriam laudis, à quo se sciunt vires accepisse certaminis. —*Greg. Moral.*, lib. xxii. He that would see all cavils more fully answered, may peruse D. Featly, Dippers Dipt, p. 161, edit. 6.

[2] Cum gubernatio sit ordo divinitus institutus, atque adeo Deus ipse præsit gubernationi politicæ, non est cujusvis sibi arrogare illud imperium divinum; aut se judicem loco Dei constituere.—*Mollerus in Psalm* lxxxii. 1. It is not every man's work to rule, but only such as are appointed, 2 Chron. xix. 5, and have commission.

authoritatively but he that is sent, so no man can execute justice juridically and authoritatively but he that is sent. It is true, it may be, some private person may have abler gifts for magistracy than some that are in office, yet may he in nowise exercise those gifts without a call; and if he should condemn and execute a man, it is murder in him, because God never commissioned him to such a work. As God was angry with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram for opposing Moses as well as Aaron, so he is the same God to the same sinners still. As two things must concur to make a gospel minister—viz. 1. Gifts; 2. A power to execute these gifts—so these two must concur to make a magistrate.

(1.) Gifts and qualifications fit for his place.

(2.) A commission and call to execute those gifts. Skill to govern, power to manage that skill, and will to actuate both, make a complete magistrate.[1] Let a man be never so well gifted or graced, were he as holy as Job, as wise as Solomon, as learned as Moses and Daniel, yet, without a call and solemn designation to this work, he may not act as a magistrate; or, if he do, he can look for no success or blessing from God in what he doth. These fight against God, and cannot prosper; they break that rank and order which God hath set up in the world. It is *per me*, and not *per se*, that kings reign, Prov. viii. 15; it is God that hath made them magistrates as well as men, and not they themselves, Ps. c. 3. Judging and preaching are not mere acts of gifts, but office. Let every man, therefore, abide in that calling wherein he is called;[2] for they are ofttimes most insufficient who think themselves most sufficient for this weighty calling. Ambition is an argument of unworthiness: *Ne sit qui ambit,* let not him speed that sues; let not those be preferred that would have places, but such as places would have. It is rebellious Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 4) and tyrannical Abimelech that sue for rule. The fat olive, the fruitful vine, and pleasant fig-tree refuse preferment; but it is the scratching bramble, the tearing briar, an empty keck, a worthless and fruitless shrub, that hath no shadow to refresh, but is full of prickles, good for nothing but to stop gaps, and after to be burnt, which desires to tyrannise over people, Judges ix. 8–16. Good men are modest; they know honours are burdens, and they will not meddle with them till they be called to them. They that are worthy, must be

[1] Ἀντιτασσόμενος, resistit, Rom. xiii. 2, est verbum emphaticum, *q.d.*, qui magistratibus resistit, contra ordinem divinum se quasi ordinat.—*Dithmar. Polit.*

[2] *Tu supplex ora, tu protege, tuque labora:* Let ministers preach and pray, magistrates defend, husbandmen till, and others do the duties of their places.—*Luther.*

sued to; they are sooner found in retirement than in popularity: as Moses following Jethro's flock, Gideon in the barn, David at the fold, Saul hid amongst the stuff, 1 Sam. x. 22; and Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus was called from the plough to be dictator.[1]

4. This is matter of singular consolation to magistrates, that since their office is God's ordinance, he will defend it against all the rage of men and devils; he is the God of order, and he will preserve it in despite of all its enemies. As he calls his to dignity, so he will keep them in it, Ps. cxxxii. 17, 18; Isa. xlii. 6, and xlv. 13; as the judgment is not yours but God's, so he will assist you in it against all opposers, be they never so great, Joshua i. 5; 2 Chron. xix. 6.[2] He that hath set the crown upon your heads, will keep it there; if you uphold his kingdom, he will uphold yours; if you be mindful of God's work, he will not be unmindful of your reward, Neh. xiii. 22; Isa. xxxviii. 3. Keep God's way, and he will keep you, as he did Moses, Joshua, Hezekiah, Josiah, David, Constantine, Theodosius and others. Though you meet with many troubles, run many hazards, and pass through many dangers and difficulties by reason of atheists, idolaters, libertines, and all the rabble of hell, yet in six troubles the Lord will be with you, and in the seventh he will not leave you;[3] he will be your assistant in your labours, your comforter in temptations, your director in straits, and your Oedipus in doubts; he will subdue your people under you, and incline their hearts to obedience, Ps. xlvii. 3, and cxliv. 10; he will give you peace of conscience in the faithful discharge of your duty, and a crown of glory hereafter.

It is very necessary in these tumultuous times for magistrates to be well assured that their calling is from God; it will wonderfully uphold their spirits in a time of trial. When Luther had written a book in defence of the civil magistrate, and proved it to be God's ordinance, and very pleasing to him, when Frederick Duke of Saxony had read it, it is said that for joy he lifted up his hands to heaven and gave thanks to God that now he knew out of the holy Scriptures that his calling was ordained of God, and that with a good conscience he might now perform the duties of it. It is an act of dignation and not of indigence that God makes use of any to be instruments of conveying his blessing to others; *hoc agens lib-*

[1] *Vide* Florus de Gest. Rom., lib. i. cap. 11.

[2] *Vide* Mr Woodward's King's Chronicle of the Good Kings of Judah. A treatise worthy the serious perusal of all magistrates.

[3] Omnis qui regit, est tanquam signum in quod omnia jacula Satan et mundus dirigunt.—*Luther.*

errimum, he can do his own work without us, he needs us not. It is a great honour that he is pleased to employ us either in magistracy or ministry; when he hath once invested us in those offices, and we discharge them faithfully, he takes the despite that is done to us, as done to himself, 1 Thes. iv. 8. When the Israelites rejected Samuel, God comforts him with this, 'They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me,' who set thee as a judge over them, and have gifted thee with graces for the faithful discharge of thy office, 1 Sam. viii. 7. You are God's more immediate servants, Jer. xxvii. 6; Rom. xiii. 2; the dishonour that is done to you, reflects upon your Master: and if David so sharply revenged the abuse that was done to his ambassadors by the Ammonites, 1 Sam. x. 45; let not the levelling Ammonites of our time, who vilify both magistracy and ministry, think to escape unpunished, 1 Sam. xxvi. 9; Prov. xvii. 11, and xxiv. 21, 22; Rom. xiii. 2. Magistrates are called fathers: and he that cursed his father was to die for it, Lev. xx. 9.

5. Bless God for magistracy. Every day we should be praising him for this ordinance; that we can rise in peace, and rest in peace; travel in peace, and come to God's house in peace, and sit every man under his own vine and fig-tree in peace; all this, and a thousand times more, we enjoy by the means of magistracy, 1 Kings iv. 25; Micah iv. 4. It is these Mordecais that bring wealth and peace to a people, Esther x. 3. Magistrates are the greatest servants in the world; they wake that we may sleep, they labour that we may rest in peace; by them violence is suppressed, justice executed, religion maintained, and human societies preserved,[1] Ps. lxxii. *per totum*, and lxxxv. 10–13. These are, or should be, eyes to the blind, legs to the lame, terrors to the wicked, towers to the righteous, fathers to the fatherless, widows, and oppressed.

Take away government, and what would nations be but dens of devils, and cages of unclean birds?[2] We see how wickedness abounds though we have magistrates to restrain it; but oh, the abominations that would be in the world if there were no government! What idolatry, witchcraft, blasphemy, heresy, murder, theft, atheism, barbarism, routs and riots, cruelty and villany would overflow in all places![3] When there was no king in Israel, then every

[1] Omnium somnos illius vigilantia defendit, omnium otium illius labor, omnium delitias illius industria, omnium vacationem illius occupatio.—*Seneca.*

[2] Remota justitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?—*August. de Civitat. Dei.* lib. iv. cap. 4.

[3] Nisi rectores civitatum essent, feriorem feris viveremus vitam, non mordentes tantum, sed et vorantes alios alii.—*Grotius de Jure belli.* lib. i cap. 4, sec. 1. See more Mr Jenkyn on Jude 8, Obser. 1, p. 299, folio.

man's lust was a law, and they fell to idolatry, uncleanness and much wickedness, as appears, Judges xvii. 6, and xviii. *ult.*, and xix. 1; hence the taking away of the judge and the prophet is reckoned as a sore judgment, and the very inlet to oppression and confusion; Isa. iii. 1, 2, 5, and xxiv. 1, 2; Amos ii. 3; Hosea x. 3, and xiii. 11. Amongst all those heavy curses which David calls for against his malicious enemies, this is the first; 'Let a wicked man rule over him,' Ps. cix. 6. What is an army without a general, a school without a master, a family without a governor, or a nation without rulers? they need no foreign force to destroy them, they would soon destroy themselves, Hab. i. 13, 14.[1]

Stobeus tells us of a Persian law, that after the death of their king every man had five days' liberty to do what he pleased, that by beholding the wickedness and disorder of those few days, they might prize government the better all their days after.[2] When Moses was absent but forty days in the mount, the Israelites presently worship a calf. In the book of Judges we read of the death of Ehud, Gideon, and their governors, and presently the people change their gods, and did evil in the sight of the Lord to their own destruction; Judges ii. 19, 20, and iv. 2, and viii. 33. Take government out of the world, and then take the sun out of the firmament, and leave it no more a κὸσμος, a beautiful structure, but a χαὸς, a confused heap; without this men would be like Ishmael, wild men; every man's hand would be against his brother, Gen. xxvi. 12.

It is reported of Maximilian the emperor, that as oft as he passed by the gallows he would put off his hat and salute it, with a *salve sancta justitia!* All hail, holy justice. Of all people, Christians have most cause to bless God for it; for they are exposed more to the malice of wicked men by reason of their profession and principles, which are so opposite to the ways of the world, so that they are as lambs amongst lions, as sheep amongst wolves, as a lily amongst thorns, which would soon be devoured, did not the great Shepherd of the flock raise up shepherds under him to defend it. These are the ministers of God for our good: 1. For our natural good, for our lives. 2. Civil good, for our estate. 3. Moral, for defence of us in goodness. 4. Spiritual, to protect the gospel; and

[1] Sine imperio nec domus ulla, nec civitas, nec gens, nec hominum universum genus stare, nec ipse mundus durare potest.—*Cicero*, lib. iii. *de Legib.*

[2] Persis lex erat, ut a morte regis, legum et juris intermissio per quinque dies fieret, ut intelligerent subditi in quanto pretio regem ac legem haberi deceat.—*Stobæus*, Serm. 42, p. 294.

this good is reduced by the apostle to three heads, 1 Tim. ii. 2, Peace, piety, and honesty. They are a means under God to preserve the lives of us and ours; our goods, sabbaths, ordinances, and all that is near and dear to us: so that when government fails, 1. Order fails; 2. Religion fails; 3. Justice fails; 4. Strength fails; 5. Wealth fails; 6. Honour fails; 7. Peace fails: all this is abundantly proved by a learned pen.[1] As where there is no ministry, the people perish; so where there is no magistracy, the people come to ruin, Prov. ii. 14. These are shields to defend us, fathers to tender us, yea, nursing fathers to carry us in their bosoms, pillars that under God uphold the world, that it fall not into confusion, and the very life of the state, Lam. iv. 20.[2]

How great then is the sin of those ungrateful men who vilify magistracy, and by consequence do contemn the goodness and providence of God to the sons of men! yea, they contemn that which is the greatest glory and choice privilege of a nation. When David would set forth the glory of Jerusalem, he tells us, there sit the thrones of judgment, *i.e.*, there sit the judges who administer justice to all, and keep all in peace, Ps. cxxii. 5. Hence it is promised as a great blessing to an obedient people, that they shall have governors to rule them: 'And their eyes shall see the King in his glory,' Isa. xxxiii. 17; Jer. xvii. 24, 25, as it is reckoned for a choice mercy to have our own sons for prophets,[3] Amos ii. 11. To be taught by strangers who are called to the work, is a mercy; but to be taught by our own sons raised and fitted for the work of the ministry, that heightens the mercy; 'I raised up your sons for prophets, of your young men for Nazarites;' and as good ministers are promised a special blessing, Isa. xxx. 20; Jer. iii. 15.; Rom. xv. 29, so it is promised as a special blessing that our nobles shall be of ourselves, and our governors shall proceed from the midst of us, Jer. xxx. 21. Strangers shall not rule over them, nor keep them in slavery, but they should have governors of their own, that would be tender over them. It is a sign of God's love to a people when he gives them rulers that will execute justice amongst them, 1 Kings x. 9; 2 Chron. ii. 11, and ix. 8. When a people is but

[1] Mr Nath. Ward in his Fast Sermon on Ezek. xix. 14, pp. 9–11, &c.

[2] Magistratus est illud vinculum per quod respublica cohæret, est spiritus ille vitalis quem hæc tot millia trahunt, nihil ipsa per se futura nisi onus et præda, si mens illa imperii subtrahatur.—*Seneca de Clement*, lib. i. cap. 4.

[3] Quis cogitando, nedum dicendo consequi potest, quam beata sit res sub bono et salutari principe vivere, qui et gloriam Dei et salutem reipublicæ quærat, augeat et conservet? Dona sunt hæc, et ut Scriptura loquitur, benedictiones Dei opulentissimæ. —*Luther in Præf. ad Principes.*

willing to obey, violence shall no more be heard in the land, nor wasting and destruction in their borders, but he will restore their judges as at the first, and their counsellors as at the beginning, Isa. i. 25, and lx. 18, and under them shall all human abilities be improved to the highest apex and utmost excellence; all callings, laws, learning, valour, religion, arts, and faculties, thrive and flourish with much happiness and success under the wings and warmth of a godly government. Oh, then, let us bless the God of heaven, who is pleased to govern man by men; as it is a mercy in the church that he teacheth us by men like ourselves, so it is a mercy in the state that he rules us by men who are, or at leastwise ought to be, sensible of our infirmities, and to whom we may have familiar recourse in our necessities;[1] if the Lord himself, or any angel should appear, we could not endure the sight. It is a great mercy, and argues his tender love unto mankind, that he hath set his own name upon our governors, and adorned them with the gifts of his Spirit, fitting them for such noble employment.

6. Since magistrates are set up by God, it is our duty to reverence them as his vicars and deputies, and that not only for fear of his wrath,[2] which yet must not be slighted, Prov. xvi. 14, and xix. 20, but out of obedience to God's command, who bids us honour them, Rom. xiii. 5, and joins them with himself, Prov. xxiv. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 17.[3] This reverence must be *Corde*, *ore*, *opere*.

(1.) It must not be complimental, but cordial; we must not once harbour an evil thought against them; for God will find out a way to reveal and revenge it, Eccles. x. 8, 20. But we must pray for them. What if they be heathens and persecutors, and neglect their duty? Yet we must not neglect ours, Num. xxvii. 16; Dan. vi. 21. Nero, Decius, Dioclesian, were heathenish tyrants, yet he bids us pray for them, 1 Tim. ii. 2, and the primitive Christians prayed for such.[4] Magistrates are encompassed with many cares, fears, dangers, and difficulties; we should, therefore, by prayer hold up Moses his hands that he faint not, and beseech the Lord to enrich them with all graces fit for their places, as knowledge, zeal,

[1] See more Caryl on Job xxix. 7, pp. 476, 477.

[2] Fear is of a preservative nature, and makes men keep within compass. *φόβος ἐστι φυλακτικόν τι.—Aristot.*

[3] Sub honorandi verbo sinceram ac candidam existimationem complectitur, et regem cum Deo conjungens, sanctæ cujusdam venerationis ac dignitatis plenum esse ostendit.—*Calvin. Instit.*, lib. iv. cap. 20, sec. 22.

[4] *Vide* Tertul. in Apolog. cap. 30. Miremur charitatem Pauli, qui pro tali rege, vel potius tam impio tyranno, tamen Christianos omnes Deum vult orare, nec pro solo Nerone, sed pro omnibus illi similibus.—*Soto.*

sincerity, &c. As every one receives benefit by the magistrate, so every one should pray for him, and bear his part in this service, as those busy idolaters did in their blind way: Jer. vii. 18, 'The children gather wood, the fathers kindle a fire, and the women knead the dough,' every one doth something. Magistrates and ministers of all men have most need of our prayers; they are the common butts against which Satan and his agents shoot all their arrows; he overlooks small and great, and dischargeth principally at the kings of Israel.[1] Many can rail, but few pray for them, which makes things go so ill with us.[2] Besides, in praying for them we pray for ourselves; in their peace lies our peace, and the peace of the churches; hence God's people, when they were captives in Babylon, yet must pray for its peace on this very account, Jer. xxix. 7. Besides, kings' hearts are in the hand of God, and at the prayers of his people he turns them, Neh. ii. 4; Esther iv. 16, and v. 2; Job xii. 24; Prov. xxi. 1. Yea, we must not only pray, but preach for them too, Titus iii. 1; men must often be put in mind of their duty to superiors; many look upon themselves as fellow-creatures with magistrates, but God will have men know their places, and learn subjection.

(2.) We must give them reverent and respectful titles. Aaron calls Moses, my lord, Exod. xxiii. 22. The woman of Tekoa calls David an angel, 2 Sam. xiv. 17, and so doth Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. xix. 27. They are the fathers of our country; and he that curseth father or mother, must die for it, Exod. xx. 12, and xxi. 15, 17. Reviling speeches do rather exasperate than mend men. It is our duty to make the best construction of their actions, interpreting nothing sinisterly, but concealing their infirmities, and with Shem and Japhet go backward and cover them; we must not suffer them in their persons or actions to be traduced or dishonoured; but if we must, as occasion requires, lay down our lives for our brethren, then much more for the fathers and defenders of the nation, 1 John iii. 16. It is therefore made the brand of libertines and profane persons to despise government, and to speak evil of dignities, 2 Pet. ii. 10; Jude 8.

(3.) By reverent gestures, uncovering the head, bowing the knee,

[1] Quo magis est abies procera, evertitur Euris.
Culmina non valles fulmina torta petunt.—*Verinus.*

[2] Si tam prompti essemus ad preces pro magistratibus fundendas, quam parati sumus ad detrahendum ac maledicendum ipsis; se res nostræ melius haberent.—*Bugenhag.* See more Caryl Serm. on Ps. lxxii. 2, p. 30; Downam's Warfare, 2, P., lib. ii. cap. 12, sec. 5–8, p. 500, &c.

and making obeisance to them, as Nathan and Araunah did to David, 1 Kings i. 23; 2 Sam. xxiv. 20. So when Joseph was made viceroy and governor of Egypt, they cry before him Abrech, bow the knee,[1] Gen. xli. 43. Our deportment before them must savour of humility, and not of insolence, Lev. xix. 32; Job xxix. 7, 8; Eccles. viii. 3. Next to the honour which we owe to God himself, we owe respect, and ought to honour magistrates, by a prompt obeying their just and lawful commands, in civil and political affairs,[2] 1 Sam. xxii. 14. As our obedience to God, so our obedience to the ministers of God should be made known to all men, Rom. xvi. 19. It is reported of the kings of Peru, that they were wont to use a tassel or fringe made of red wool, which they wore upon their heads, and when they sent any governor to rule as viceroy in any part of the realm, they delivered him one of the threads of their tassel, and for one of those simple threads he was as much obeyed as if he had been the king himself. Yet the laws of men do not simply and *per se* bind the conscience, but only *derivativè*, so far as they are grounded on God's law, and are agreeable thereto.[3] We must so give to Cæsar his dues that we rob not God of his,[4] Luke xx. 25, for the subject is not bound to obey in all things, but only so far as God's glory is untouched. Hence the Lord punished Ephraim for obeying the sinful commands of wicked men, Hosea v. 11; and the Israelites smarted for obeying Jeroboam's wicked command in worshipping the golden calves, 1 Kings xii. 29, 30. In this sense we may not be the servants of men, 1 Cor. vii. 23. It is true we may and must obey their hard commands, but never their sinful.[5] We must so honour the king, that withal we fear God, Prov. xxiv. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 17, and obey them in, but not against, the Lord, Eph. vi. 1. Such flatterers as obey their wicked commands are great enemies to them, and help to bring God's judgments on them. In such cases we should answer as they did, Acts v. 29, 'Whether it be better to obey God or man, judge ye.' It is no dishonour to an earthly king to see the King of kings served

[1] Imaginem Dei rex gestat, ideoque colendus et amandus est, si non propter se, saltem vocationis et functionis suæ causa.—*Aug. de Vet. and N. Test.*

[2] The laws of men properly bind the outward man, the conscience God reserves for himself.—*Byfield on* 1 *Pet.* ii. 13, p. 430, 431.

[3] Leges regum tum demum obligant conscientiam, cum promulgant ea quæ Deus præcipit.

[4] See Mr Hieron on that text, after Ps. lii. p. 446.

[5] *Vide* Woodward's King's Chroniele of the Bad Kings of Judah, p. 87. Malo in malo non est obediendum. Etsi parendum in omnibus patri, in eo non parendum quo efficitur ne pater sit.—*Seneca*, lib. ii., controv. 9.

before him;[1] the midwives are commended and rewarded by God for disobeying the wicked command of Pharaoh, Exod. i.; Heb. xi. 23. We must yield passive obedience where we cannot yield active, as the three Chaldean worthies submitted to the fire when they could not actively obey the king's command, Dan. iii. 18. We desire to give as much to the magistrate as the word of God gives him; and if any give him more, the more shame for them, there is more of flattery than honesty in it.

See this question, *An leges humanæ obligent conscientiam*,[2] more fully debated in D. Davenant *de Judice ac norma fidei*, cap. 26; D. Andrews on the Fifth Commandment, chap. iv. p. 336; Ames. CC., lib. i., cap. 11, 12; Rutherford of Church Government, p. 201; Sharpius *loc. com.*, P. 2, pag. 240; Alsted's CC., p. 340, 342; and Gerhard de Magistrat. Polit. p. 355; Musculus *loc. com.*, 645 p., folio; Ames. CC., lib. v. c. 25, q. 4.

(4.) By a cheerful paying all tributes, customs, taxes to them. The godly render it as willingly, and pay it as cheerfully as if it were a free gift, Luke xx. 25; Rom. xiii. 7. So did Christ, Mat. xvii. 25. Tiberius Cæsar was a notorious wicked man, yet Christ commands that tribute be paid to him, Mat. xxii. 21. The state cannot subsist, nor peace be maintained, without great cost and charges.

Yet magistrates must take heed of increasing the taxes and burdens of their people, when no necessity compels, but only to please their own lusts and luxury. God threatens such, Ezek. xlv. 9; Micah iii. 2, 3. Nothing raiseth sedition and rebellion sooner in a nation than such overreaching practices; this cruelty lost Rehoboam ten tribes at a clap, 1 Kings xii. 14, 16, 19.

It is a scandal which wicked men in all ages have fastened on the godly, that they are rebellious, seditious, troublers of the state, enemies to Cæsar, &c., whereas there are not nobler and better subjects in the world than such as truly fear the God of heaven.[3]

[1] Contemne potestatem timendo majorem potestatem; ille corpus, hic animam perdere potest; ille gladium, hic minatur Gehennam.—*Aug. Hom.* vi. *de Verbis Domini.*

[2] See this more fully cleared in my Comment. on 2 Tim. iii. 2, pp. 33–43.

[3] *Vide* D. Taylor on Titus iii. 1, p. 456, 547. See this cavil confuted in my Beauty of Holiness, chap. vii. obj. 11, p. 143. Solenne est ut Christianis crimina seditionis et læsæ majestatis a persecutoribus affingantur, quibus tamen non sint obnoxii.—*Cent. Magdeb. Col.*, 420. *Vide* plura apud Laurentium in 1 Pet. ii. 12, p. 147. See more in Mr Jenkyn on Jude 8, obs. 5, 6, p. 300, 301, folio. Vir bonus est optimus civis, servus, subditus. Tertullianus laudi Christianorum accenset, quod nunquam inter seditiosos inventi fuerint, licet Ethnico Magistratui subjecti.—*Tertulli.*,

These pray for rulers, when others curse, swear, drink healths, and break their laws; these obey for conscience, others for fear of punishment only; these are ready to venture their lives and estates for their honour, when the wicked at a pinch will leave him and forsake him. They are sons of Belial that despite sovereignty, 1 Sam. x. 28; and seditious Shebas that rise in rebellion against it, 2 Sam. xx. 1. As for God's people, they are of those that are faithful and peaceable in the land, and so far from sedition, that they quietly bear even the cruellest tortures of the vilest tyrants. It were easy to show that none can be truly loyal but such as are truly religious. Those that are unfaithful to God, how can they be true to their sovereign? He that fears not God will never honour the king. Religion takes away that ferity and brutishness of spirit which is in men, and makes them obey out of conscience to God's command.

Obj. Were they good men, I could willingly obey them; but our rulers are wicked men and cruel tyrants; they care not what burdens and taxes they lay upon us; they do not only fleece, but flay us; they tear our flesh and suck our blood, and must we obey such?

Ans. As servants must obey not only good and gentle masters, but also the froward and perverse heathenish ones, 1 Pet. ii. 18, so far as their commands cross not God's commands; so subjects must obey not only pious and mild governors, but also harsh and cruel ones, in external and civil things, *usque ad aras*, so far as may consist with a good conscience. The power is his, whatever the persons be; the office is his, however they came by it, and so calls for our respect and observance.[1] Even tyrants are ordained of God for the punishment of an ungrateful and rebellious people; when men grow weary of Christ's easy yoke, it is just with God to put the iron yoke of tyrants on them, Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. Hence he is said not only to give kings in mercy to be nursing fathers, but also kings in wrath to be scourges to a wicked people, Hosea xiii. 11. He sent wicked Saul as well as religious David, and he is called the Lord's anointed, 1 Sam. xxiv. 7; and so is Cyrus, a heathen, Isa. xlv. 15; Nebuchadnezzar is called God's servant, Jer. xxvii. 6; Dan. ii. 37; and the king of Assyria is called God's

lib. *ad Scapulam.* Quomodo fidem Imperatori præstabunt inviolatam, qui Deo sunt perjuri? dixit Constantius.—*Euseb.*, lib. i. cap. 11.

[1] Potestas est a Deo, sed non abusus potestatis. Res ipsa sæpe est a Deo, licet modus quo quis eam assequitur non sit a Deo; sic divitiæ sunt donum Dei, licet modus quo avari eas sibi comparant non sit a Deo.—*Gerhard.*

rod to chastise his people for their sins,[1] Isa. x. 5. As the wickedness of a minister doth not destroy the ministry, so the wickedness of a magistrate doth not destroy magistracy. Cruel parents are parents still; hence it is that in the New Testament we are so oft commanded to be subject to heathen magistrates, to pray for them, to pay to them, and to yield them either active or passive obedience,[2] Mat. xxii. 21; Rom. xiii. 1; 1 Tim. ii. 2; Titus iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13, 17; and if tyrants were not ordained by God, we must exclude his providence from the greatest part of the world. But the psalmist tells us that the kingdom of his providence and power reacheth over all; Ps. ciii. 19, 'The Lord hath prepared his throne, and his kingdom ruleth over all.' All creatures are his servants; even the devils in hell do God's will, though against their own; and so do tyrants and wicked men. They oft break the will of God's command, and yet they fulfil the will of his decree. They serve his purpose and providence materially, when formally and intentionally they seek and serve their own, Acts iv. 27, 28.

We are apt to complain of governors, but who complains of his sins, which provoke the Lord to set up such governors over us?[3] Judges iii. 8, and iv. 2; Job xxxiv. 30; Ps. cvii. 40; Prov. xxviii. 2; Eccles. iii. 16; Isa. x. 5, 6; Ezek. vii. 11; Hosea v. 7, and xiii. 11. Let us therefore repent of them, and judge ourselves; then will God make medicines of those poisons, and either turn or overturn such as molest his people.[4] As in nature, so in government, nothing is permanent that is violent, so that it is hard to see an old tyrant; although for a time they may uphold their state by force and fraud, yet in the end divine justice confounds their practices, and infatuates their counsels to their own ruin. Though they be great, yet there is a greater than they, who will break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, Ps. ii. 9, easily, suddenly, irrecoverably.[5] Though men cannot or dare not punish them, yet God will; if king Zachariah be wicked and draw Israel to sin, God will soon cut him off, so that

[1] Qui dedit regnum Mario, ipse et Caio Cæsari; qui Augusto, ipse et Neroni; qui Vespasiano suavissimo, ipse et Domitiano crudelissimo; qui Constantino, ipse Apostatæ Juliano.—*Aug. de Civit. Dei.*, lib. v. cap. 21.

[2] Dominium temporale habet fundamentum in natura, non in gratia. Ergo cum natura maneat in impiis, dominia exercere possunt.—*Davenant. Determ. Q.* xxx. p. 136. See more in my Comment. on 2 Tim. iii. 2, p. 67.

[3] Peccatum populi tyrannorum vires.

[4] Tollenda est culpa, ut cesset tyrannorum plaga.—*Aug.*

[5] *Vide* Mr Woodward's King's Chronicle of the Wicked Kings of Judah, *per totum.*

he shall reign but six months, 2 Kings xv. 8; and Shallum that killed him, following his idolatry, reigned but one month after him, ver. 13, and Pekahiah his son continuing that idolatry, reigned but two years, ver. 23.[1] The persecuting Roman emperors were sixty-three, yet only six of them died a natural death.[2] Usually God cuts off tyrants suddenly, and raiseth up pious and peaceable rulers in their stead; after a wicked Ahaz comes a good Hezekiah, after idolatrous Amon a zealous Josiah. After harsh King Henry comes mild King Edward, and after furious Queen Mary, peaceable Queen Elizabeth.[3] Thus after a storm usually comes a calm, and after a sharp winter a pleasant summer.

2. As for taxes, though they be great and grievous, yet the best remedy is prayer and patience. Things that cannot be remedied with patience, must be endured.[4] In 1 Sam. viii. 11, the Lord tells them what will be the practice of their king, not as approving or allowing of what he should do; for it is the threatening of a judgment, not the imposition of a duty, *q.d.*, This people shall dearly rue the casting off that form of government which I had given them. Yet under all their pressures there must be no rising, but only in prayer; 'They shall cry unto the Lord, and acknowledge their sin,' which is the meritorious cause of all their sufferings; yet it is the wisdom of governors to fleece and not to flay the flock, for fear of insurrection. It was good counsel which King Henry IV. upon his death-bed gave to his son; he admonished him to be moderate in his taxes; for so long as Englishmen, saith he, have money and riches, so long shall you have obeisance from them; but when they be poor and in want, they be always ready to make insurrections at every turn.[5]

Obj. Magistrates are not only cruel, but careless; they neglect their duty, and therefore I may well omit my pay.

Ans. Yet this cannot excuse thee from doing thy duty; another man's sin will not excuse mine; recrimination is no purgation.

2. If they are bad, yet better have a bad one than none at all;

[1] Ad generum Cereris sine cæde et vulnere pauci
Descendunt reges, et sicca morte tyranni.—*Juven.*, Satyr. 10.

[2] *Vide* August de Civit. Dei. l. 3. c. 15.

[3] Illud usa venit ut sceleratissimum sequatur optimus Princeps; quorum enim exitus perhorrescunt, eorum vitam imitari turpe et periculosum ducunt. Sic Neronem Galba sequutus est; Nerva, Domitianum; Alexander Severus princeps eruditus et temperatissimus, Heliogabalum non solum bipedum, sed et quadru pedum spurcissimum.—*Vide Herodian.* c. i. and *Bodin Method. Histor.* p. 301.

[4] See more to this point in my Comment. on 2 Tim. iii. 2, page 31.

[5] Imperantis felicitas in felicitate subditorum consistit.

it is better living under a Nero than a Nerva; where nothing is lawful, than where all things are lawful. Tyranny is better than anarchy;[1] the one keeps things in some order, when anarchy puts all into confusion, and makes every man's lust his law, and set up as many tyrants as there are slaves to sin.[2] Government is *de jure naturæ;* no nation so barbarous, no time so dark but some footsteps of government might have been seen. The very bees, by the instinct of nature, have their king, whom they acknowledge and follow; and the cranes have a leader. Though the nature of man, being proud, loves not the superiority of others, and being licentious, loves not to be straitened by others, yet it teacheth subordination, and chooseth tyranny rather than anarchy. The most unruly know not how to subsist without a ruler; even thieves have a leader amongst them; yea, and those monsters of Munster that at first decried magistracy, yet when they were once got into the saddle, they quickly set up, such a one as he was, a tailor king of their own. Yea, in hell amongst the devils there is a government, there is a Beelzebub, a prince of devils, Mat. xii. 24; the devils, who are the authors of all disorder amongst others, yet have an order amongst themselves. It is ill with that state where men are left like the fishes of the sea, which have no ruler, but the greater devour the less, Hab. i. 14. Where all will rule, there is no rule, and where there is none to rule, there is all manner of misrule; as idolatry, murder, plunder, thefts, rapes, riots, and all uncleanness, Judges xvii. 4–6, xviii. 30, and xix. 1, 2. So that it is a very bad government that is worse than none at all; where there is magistracy, some may be oppressed and wronged, but none can be righted where there is none at all. Better poor people should sit under a scratching bramble, than have no hedge at all to shelter them from the storms of popular fury. Nebuchadnezzar was none of the best governors, yet he was a cedar under which the beasts of the field found shadow, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, Dan. iv. 9–12. And if a heathen magistrate be so useful, what is a Christian one?

Obs. 6. We may lawfully give titles of honour to magistrates. If God himself calls them gods, shields, saviours, &c., and lay upon them majesty, glory, and honour, Ps. xxi. 5, why should any man scruple the giving of them such titles? Away then with those sottish Quakers, who are afraid of being too respective (such is their breed-

[1] *Ubi ἀναρχία, ibi ἀταξία.*

[2] Ea quæ vera sunt secundum tres gradus, *κατὰ παντὸς, κατ' αὐτὸ, καὶ καθ' ὅλου πρῶτον*, nullam admittunt disputationem.

ing) to God's deputies; and therefore they call them thou Richard, thou Thomas, thou John, as if they were talking to some bear-wards rather than magistrates. But the Holy Ghost hath taught them better manners, and to give titles of honour to men in authority; as King Agrippa, most noble Festus, Acts xxvi. 25; most excellent Theophilus, Luke i. 3. But of this at large in another place.[1]

Caution. Yet rulers must take heed of suffering flatterers to give them titles which belong not to them;[2] as most holy, most unconquerable, omnipotent, omniscient, our Lord God, as Domitian and the popes of Rome are called by their parasites. Thus James Naylor had blasphemous titles given him by his adherents; as everlasting son of righteousness, and prince of peace; they sung before him holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; no more James, but Jesus, the Lamb of God, a perfect man, &c. Death is the lot of such blasphemers, Lev. xxiv. 16; Dan. iii. 29. It was the sin of the Persians that they honoured their kings with divine honour, as gods. Let such remember Herod, who for his pride in suffering divine honour to be given to him, was eaten up of worms or lice,[3] Acts xii. 22, 23. God is very tender of his own glory; whatever he parts withal he will not part with that,[4] Isa. xlii. 8. When Satan began to call for divine honour, Christ would bear no longer, but bids him begone, Satan.

Obs. 7. The calling of the magistrate is an honourable calling. God puts his own name on them; they are earthly gods, they judge for him, they bear his image in their office, they sit on his throne, and he sits with them there.[5] Though they be subject to infirmities, sickness, and death, as other men are, yet their calling is honourable; for the dignity of magistracy lies not so much in the persons, who are mortal,[6] but in their office, in that they are God's lieutenants on earth; they sit in his place, and exercise his power by deputation; by him they are appointed to execute justice and preserve the nations in peace and purity.[7] Now the dignity of magistracy will the better appear if we consider those titles of honour which the Scrip-

[1] See my Commentary on 2 Tim. iii. 17, obj. 2, p. 296.

[2] Præstat in κοράκας quam κὸλακας incidere, quai corvi non sæviunt nisi in mortuos, adulatores vero viventes devorant, dixit Diogenes.

[3] *Vide* Plura apud Laurentium in 1 Pet. ii. 17, obs. 4.

[4] Against flatterers, see Plutarch's Morals, p. 69; Engl. et Aretius' Problem., chap. ii. p. 50; Greenhill on Ezek. xxii. 28, p. 296; Clerk's Mirror, cap. 53; Jenkin on Jude 8, obs. 6.

[5] *Vide* Naylor's Examination.

[6] *Vide* Q. Curtius, lib. viii.

[7] Εἰκων βασιλεύς ἐστιν ἔμψυχος Θεοῦ. Imago Dei rex est animata.—*Menander.*

ture graceth them withal; for whereas libertines call them pests and plagues, persecutors, burdens, and abusers of the world by tyranny and oppression, &c.

Yet the word of God calls them, 1. Gods; 2. Sons of the Most High; 3. Saviours; 4. Fathers; 5. Nursing fathers; 6. Heads of the body; 7. Eyes of a state; 8. Servants of God; 9. Shepherds of the people; 10. Healers; 11. Pillars; 12. The Lord's anointed; 13. Dignities; 14. Nails in the building; 15. Corner-stones; 16. Shields of the earth; 17. Angels; 18. Foundations; 19. Signets; 20. Captains; 21. Rocks and hiding-places.

1. The Holy Ghost calls them gods, as we have seen at large before.

2. Sons of God, not by nature or adoption, but by office, of which see more on ver. 6.

3. The saviours of the people, Judges ii. 16, and iii. 9; Neh. ix. 27. The Lord saved Israel by the hand of Jeroboam, 2 Kings xiv. 27; and of David, 2 Sam. viii. 3. Such a one was Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. These God hath ordained for saviours and shelters to his people against the rage and violence of a wicked world; hence it is that in their straits and exigencies they appeal to Cæsar for succour, Acts xxv. 11, 12, though many times the remedy is worse than the disease; and those that should be saviours become devourers and destroyers of God's people;[1] but this is the abuse of their power. God erected them to defend and save his people, that, under them, they might lead quiet, honest, and godly lives, 1 Tim. ii. 2.

4. Fathers of the people. So Joseph, who was a prince in Egypt, is called a father, Gen. xlv. 8, and Deborah is called a mother in Israel, Judges v. 7. The Philistines called their kings Abimelech, *i.e.*, the king my father,[2] Gen. xx. 2, and xxvi. 1; Ps. xxxiv., title. Saul was a wicked king, yet David calls him my father, 1 Sam. xxiv. 11; and Job, who was a magistrate, a judge at least, as appears, Job xxix. 7, 8, and, as some conceive, a king, though his dominions might not be so large as ours now are, yet possibly such as in those ancient times, and in those eastern parts of the world, were called kings, being a supreme governor within his own territories, though perhaps but of one single city and its suburbs, with some few neighbouring villages: hence he is called the greatest man of all the east, Job i. 3; and when he came in presence, the

[1] See D. Gouge his Arrows, on Exodus xvii. 9, sec. 40, p. 203.

[2] Abimelech, *i.e.*, pater-rex, est nomen pietatis, potestatis et charitatis. Bonus princeps non differt e bono patre.—*Xenoph. Cyropæd.*, lib. viii.

princes and nobles held their tongues; he sat as chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, Job xxix. 9, 25. Yet though he were thus great, he styles himself a father to the poor, Job xxix. 16; and it was a high commendation of Valentinian the emperor, that his people knew not whether they had of him *dominum an patrem*, a father or a lord.[1] In Rome of old the senators were called fathers, and it was afterwards counted among the Romans the greatest title of honour that could be bestowed upon their consuls, generals, emperors, or whoever had deserved best of the commonwealth, to have this addition to the rest of his style, *pater patriæ*, the father of his country. This title implies not only power and authority, but also tenderness, care, and pity; they should carry fatherly affections towards their people: as a good father loves, defends, and cherisheth his children, so will a good prince his subjects; he will not grind them by cruel exactions, nor drink their blood to satisfy his own lust, nor suffer them to be poisoned with heresy;[2] when they cry for bread, he will not give them a scorpion; but he is more tender of his people than of himself, and more sensible of their miseries than his own. In all their sufferings he suffers with them; he condoles their miseries, redresseth their wrongs, relieves their wants, reforms their errors, prevents their dangers, procures their welfare and happiness by all good means.[3] Thus men of public places should be men of paternal and public spirits; such men need no guard. When King Agasicles demanded how he might be safe without a guard, it was answered, by behaving himself towards his subjects as a father to his children.[4] Hence rulers are called the arms of a people, to bear them up, and tenderly to lead them, Job xxii. 8; Ps. lxxvii. 10; Jer. xlviii. 25; Ezek. xxxi. 17.

5. Nursing fathers, and nursing mothers: Isa. xlix. 23, 'Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers;[5] a most sweet description of the loveliness of magistracy, shewing what tender care should be in them towards the church of God. No

[1] Sed Roma parentem, Roma patrem patriæ Ciceronem libera dixit.—*Juven.*, sat. 8. Homerus nihil aliud in rege desiderabat nisi ut esset fortis in hostes, bonus in cives. Cum patriæ rector dicare paterque, Utere more Dei nomen habentis idem.—*Ovid.*

[2] Nefaria fuit ista Neronis vox, Me mortuo terra igne misceatur. Et illud Caligulæ, Utinam Pop. Rom. unam haberet cervicem, quam semel truncare possem.

[3] Tarde sibi pater membra sua abscindit, et cum absciderit reponere cupit, et in abscindendo gemit, cunctatus multum diuque. Prope enim est ut libenter damnet, qui cito; prope est ut inique puniat, qui nimis.—*Sen. de Clement.*, cap. 14.

[4] Præsunt ut prosint.

[5] Varium et multiplex studium denotat, quod liberali manu ab omni illustrium hominum genere impenditur in ecclesiam Dei.—*Glassius.*

father or mother shall be more tender over their children to provide for them, and to guard them and secure them from annoyance, than governors in gospel times shall be over God's poor, helpless, fatherless people; *q.d.*, Whereas kings and rulers of the world are now opposite to the church, yet in gospel times kings and queens shall gladly take upon them thy patronage and protection both in temporals and spirituals; no nurse shall be so tender over their little ones as they shall be over thee.[1] Thy queens shall be Sarahs, (so it is in the fountain;) *i.e.*, they shall be as tender over thee as Sarah was over Isaac, who gave him suck; and as the nurse, out of love, spares no cost nor pains, but gives even her own blood to her babe, so the church's rulers shall spare no cost nor care, but will venture their lives for the church's good.[2] As God made several of the Persian kings nursing fathers and defenders of his ancient people the Jews, at the time of their return from Babylonish captivity, as we read in Ezra and Nehemiah, so we read of the Roman emperors, as Constantine, Theodosius, &c., that were guardians to the Christians in their dominions. God would have governors to carry his people in their bosoms lovingly, carefully, mildly, and gently, Num. xi. 12. Hence it is that they are called benefactors or gracious lords,[3] Luke xxii. 15, because of that bounty and beneficence which they do, or at leastwise ought to shew to their people, and are compared to a lofty tree which yields shade for beasts, nests and habitations for birds, and meat for all, Dan. iv. 20–22.

6. The heads of the body politic, and the principalities of a nation, Num. i. 16, xiv. 4, and xvii. 2; Judges xi. 8; Titus iii. 1; and that (1.) In respect of sublimity. As the head is the highest and most honourable member in man's body, so in the state the magistrate excels others in dignity and sublimity; hence he is also compared to a mountain, which stands above and overlooks the rest of the earth, Micah vi. 2.

(2.) In respect of power and profit. As the head commands the rest of the members, and directs their actions for the good of the whole, so the magistrate is set over his people, to direct and rule them for the benefit of the whole body; hence it is that Jeremiah laments the loss of Zedekiah, the last king of David's line, but none

[1] Though they be not fathers to beget thee, yet they shall be fathers to nurse thee; they shall carry thy sons and daughters in their arms, *i.e.*, they shall contribute their aid and assistance for the upholding and increasing of the church.—*Leyford.*

[2] Patet hinc, omnem potestatem ecclesiæ esse cumulativam, non privativam in libertatibus quas Christus tradidit ecclesiæ, &c.—*Apollon. Jus Mag. Circa Sacra*, p. 30.

[3] Principes vocantur Nedebim, *i.e.*, benefici, Job xii. 21; Prov. viii. 15, quia eos decet clementia et beneficentia.

of the best, with that pathetical expression, 'The breath of our nostrils is gone,' Lam. iv. 20. As a man cannot live without breath, so a commonwealth cannot long subsist without government.[1]

(3.) As all the members of the body will hazard themselves for the good of the head, so should subjects for the good of their rulers.

7. The eyes of a state. As the eye of the wicked watcheth his opportunities to do mischief, so should the magistrate's eye watch to catch them in their wickedness: to this end God hath set up magistrates to oversee the manners of the people, and calls them eyes, Job xxix. 15; Isa. xxix. 10, 'The Lord hath poured on them the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed their eyes.' But who are those? The next words tell you: the prophets and rulers hath he covered. The Hebrew word which we render rulers, is heads, because rulers are the heads of a people. And what is a head without eyes, or having its eyes covered? Rulers especially, when good, are the light of Israel, and the beauty thereof, 2 Sam. i. 19, xxi. 17, and xxiii. 4; 1 Kings iii. 28. As ministers are called seers, and the eyes of the church, 1 Sam. ix. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 16, 17, so magistrates are appointed by God to be the eyes of the commonwealth, to foresee dangers, and prevent them, and to oversee the manners of people to amend them.[2] Now, as they should not wear the sword in vain, so they should not bear these titles in vain; they should not be glass eyes or wooden legs. As those artificial limbs stand the body natural in little stead, so do these the body politic—*stat magni nominis umbra.*

8. The servants of God, Jer. xxvii. 6; Ezek. xxix. 19, 20; Hag. ii. 23. Yea, though they be heathens, yet their power is God's, and therefore he calls them his servants and ministers, Rom. xiii. 4, 6. Neither is this title any diminution to them; but it is the honour of their honours that they are servants to so great a master, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. The angels, those glorious spirits, count it their honour to be ministering spirits to such a Lord, Heb. i. 14; and Christ, by way of honour, is called God's servant, Isa. xlii. 1, and liii. 11. These are the great servants of the commonwealth, endowed with gifts of prudence, fortitude, clemency, &c., for the good of others. Neither are they only his servants by right of creation, for so all creatures are his servants, Ps. cxix. 91; nor, secondly, by right of redemption, for so the elect only are his; but by special delegation and commission from God; by

[1] Magistratus est velut totius populi communis anima, qua corpus ipsum reipublicæ sustentatur et defenditur.—*Danæus.*

[2] *Oculus in sceptro* was the Egyptian hieroglyphic of a prince's vigilancy.

way of eminency they are called his servants, because they are set to serve him in a more excellent place. Now the more eminent the master, the more noble is the service. No master like God; his work is wages, and such employment is high preferment. Yet this dignity calls for duty;[1] for a servant, how great soever he be, is but a living organ, as the philosopher calls him, to serve his master with all his might. He works for him, he gets for him, he lives to him, and dies to him; he is wholly at his beck and service. So must magistrates, who have received their power from God, spend themselves and all they have for his honour; for albeit they are gods amongst men, yet they are but men with God. The greatest emperor is but his minister. They are rulers over the persons, yet are but servants for the good of their people.[2] People must serve them, and yet they are the greatest servants. As it is the duty of all to serve them, so it is their office to serve all.

As magistrates and ministers are both διάκονοι, servants, and have the same title given them; so it should mind us of that harmony which ought to be between us. We both have one name, drive at one design, and serve one master, though in different spheres, and therefore we should assist each other in the promoting of God's glory in our places. It is a comely thing when the word and the sword go together.

9. Shepherds of the people, Num. xxvii. 17; Isa. xliv. 23; Ps. lxxvii. 20; Jer. vi. 3, xii. 10, and xlix. 19; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Micah v. 4; Zech. x. 2.

They must resemble good shepherds, (1.) In industry and fortitude. As they are exposed to wind and weather, enduring summer's heat and winter's frost, for the good of their flocks, and venture their lives in their defence, Gen. xxxi. 38–40; Isa. xxxi. 4, against dogs, wolves, lions, and bears, that would worry the flock;[3] so must rulers be industrious in watching over the flock, defending it from the violence of wild beasts. He must not tolerate seducers, who are called dogs, wolves, foxes, to destroy the flock of Christ, but he must drive them from the fold, and keep his sheep from the poisonous pastures of heretics. The weak lambs of Christ he must carry in his bosom, and the strong he must preserve from going astray. This is the meaning of that in Num. xxvii. 17, where Moses prays that the Lord's people be not as sheep without a shepherd, but may have a ruler to go in and out before them, *i.e.*, one

[1] Quo sublimior est gloria, eo major cura.—*Cyprian.*

[2] Qui imperat, servus servorum est.—*Luther.*

[3] Οὐ χρῆ παννύχιον εὕδειν βουληφόρον ἀνδρα,—*Homer.*

that may guide and govern them both at home and abroad, in time of war and peace. Thus did Moses himself; what indefatigable pains did he take for the good of God's people! he even consumed himself till he had assistance provided for him, Exod. xviii. 18. It is said of Agesilaus, that so great was his care of the public good, that he could scarce get time to be sick. God hath set up rulers for this very end; by good laws to guard his people, and by arms valiantly to defend them in their bodies, souls, goods, and good name, from the violence of unreasonable men. They are principally ordained for the good of the church. All is theirs *finaliter*, *i.e.*, the end why God created all things was specially for the good of his church. As ministers, so Cæsars are set up by God for the benefit of his people, who are exposed to more dangers than other men. Shepherds are set for the safety of the sheep, and not of the wolves; and as for the punishment of wicked men, it is principally reserved for the judgment of the great day, 2 Pet. ii. 9. The defence of the godly is the magistrate's great work. This office will take up the whole man. It was the sin of the bishops, that they would be bishops in the church, and lord-keepers, lord-treasurers, privy councillors, and justices of the peace too; and so, between both, they were neither good magistrates nor good ministers, but deceived the church, misled the king, and wronged the state. Of such Latimer complains, Since lording and loitering hath come up, preaching hath gone down, contrary to the apostles' times, for they preached and lorded not, but now they lord and preach not. They that be lords will ill go to plough; it is no meet office for them, it beseems not their state, and thus came up lording loiterers. And if the ploughman in the country were as negligent in his office as prelates be in theirs, we should not live long for want of food.[1] Let such consider, [1.] That magistracy and ministry are two distinct offices, to be executed by two distinct persons, 2 Chron. xix. 11, in different administrations, having different objects and ends, and therefore ought not to be confounded by us; hence the domination of the priests is reckoned as a horrid thing, Jer. v. 30, 31; Ezek. xxxiv. 4.

[2.] Christ himself tells us that his kingdom is spiritual, it is not of this world; and when they sought to make him a king, he fled from them, John vi. 15, and refused to divide inheritances, Luke xii. 14, or to sentence the woman taken in adultery, which belonged to the magistrate's office, John viii. 11; yea, he forbade his disciples

[1] Latimer's Sermon on the Plough, pp. 19, 20; *vide* Tilenum in Syntag., p. 2, Disp. 32. Thes. 33; and Amesii Medul., lib. ii. cap. 17, sec. 48.

and their successors the exercising of any lordly or political dominion,[1] Mat. xx. 25; Luke xxii. 25. And if they might not serve tables and see to the poor, because it hindered their studies, Acts vi. 2, much less may they attend seats of judicature, which are greater impediments; besides, they are expressly commanded not to entangle themselves in the things of this world, 2 Tim. ii. 4; and this drowning themselves in secular offices is condemned by many councils.[2]

(2.) In tenderness over the flock. A good shepherd doth fleece but not flay his sheep; so a good magistrate is moderate in his taxes and impositions on his people. Many rulers are tyrannical beasts, not shepherds; hence those four persecuting monarchs are compared to beasts for their cruelty, Dan. vii. 3, 7; when they should be angels and guardians to defend, they are devouring beasts that have teeth, great teeth, great iron teeth. So is that beast in Daniel described, to shew what spoil and havoc he would make amongst the people. Of such unnatural shepherds the Lord complains, Micah iii. 3; Zech. xi. 5. Such must know that the flock is the Lord's, not theirs; the people are the sheep of his pasture, and therefore they are called his, by a special propriety, John xxi. 15, 16, my lambs, my sheep; not thy lambs, or thy sheep. When Solomon prayed for an understanding heart, it was that he might judge thy people, 1 Kings iii. 9; not my people, to flay, slay, and destroy, but thy people, to be loved, fed, and defended by me. Princes are not set up to seek themselves, but their peoples' good.[3]

(3.) In excellency, As the shepherd excels his sheep, so should rulers excel their people.[4] As Saul was taller by the head and shoulders than other men, so ought these to excel in wisdom, temperance, righteousness, and religion, that by their good example they might lead their people after them. Agesilaus said well, A prince must outgo his subjects, not in lust and pleasure, but in temperance and magnanimity. So said Cyrus, He is not worthy to govern that is no better nor more virtuous than they over whom he is to command.

10. Healers, and binders, and chirurgeons, which bind up the

[1] Stetisse lego apostolos judicandos, non sedisse judicantes.—*Bern.*, lib. i. *de Consid.*

[2] Concil. Eliber., can. 19; Carthag., 1, can. 6, 9; Calcedon, can. 3; Constant., 6, can. 9; Moguntin., can. 10, 12; Rhemens., can. 29, &c.

[3] Reipublicæ salus suprema lex esto, et præcipuus scopus quem sibi quilibet magistratus proponat.—*Plato de Rep.*, lib. i.

[4] Magistratu dignum non esse quenquam qui non sit melior subditis, dixit Cyrus.

wounds of their people, and labour to heal the divisions which are amongst them. Hence it is that, Job xxxiv. 17, Isa. iii. 7, rulers are called healers, or binders up, a metaphor taken from chirurgery, and the binding up of wounds and sores for the cure of them.[1] And oh that the rulers of our nation would labour to make good this blessed title, by using all good means for the healing of all these sad divisions, both in doctrine and discipline, both in principles and practice. Parliaments for the state, and synods for the church, are excellent remedies against exorbitances, both in the one and the other.

11. Pillars of a state. It cannot stand long without them. The world would soon fall into confusion, and shatter all to pieces (as to its civil capacity) if the Lord had not founded it on the pillars of government: Ps. lxxv. 3, 'I bear up the pillars of the earth.' David, a king, was a pillar, that by his wisdom and faithfulness did bear up the inferior magistrates, whom he calls the pillars of the earth in a political sense. These are the stakes in the hedge of the state, which keep up the fence that the wild beast enter not; yea, the Lord looks at any one of them as able to make up a breach against him, Exod. xxxii. 10; Ezek. xxii. 30, 31; Jer. v. 1. If the Lord could have found but a man that executed judgment, *i.e.*, but one faithful magistrate in Jerusalem, he had spared it for his sake. One Phinehas executing judgment stayed the plague, Ps. cvi. 30.

12. Christs, or the Lord's anointed. So Saul was called, 1 Sam. xii. 3, 5, and xxiv. 6; and David, 2 Sam. xix. 21; Ps. lxxxiv. 9, and cxxxii. 10; and Cyrus, though a heathen, and one that had not received the external unction of oil which the kings of Israel received at their inauguration, yet being appointed of God to do him service, this call of God was beyond all the external unction in the world, Isa. xlv. 1. It is true, the kings whose choice had somewhat extraordinary in it, were installed into their office by pouring of oil upon them,[2] 1 Sam. x. 1, and xvi. 12, 13; 1 Kings xix. 15, 16, and ii., ix., iii. Now, this ceremony of anointing signified that they were called by God to their office, and should receive from him all gifts and graces needful for their places. Yet this title is given to all believers,[3] Ps. cv. 15; 1 Cor. i. 22; 1 John ii. 20, 27.

[1] Chobesh, *ligator vulnerum*, from Chabash, to tie fast, because it is the part of a good prince to bind up the wounds of his subjects; the light of his countenance should be as life to his people, and his favour as the latter rain, Prov. xvi. 15.

[2] See more fully our Large Annot. on 1 Sam. x. 1.

[3] Ungere aliquem est eum tum muneri alicui præficere, tum donis ad illum obeun-

13. Dignities, glories,[1] and majesties, dominions, principalities, and powers, Rom. viii. 38; 2 Pet. ii. 10; Jude 8; all, in the abstract, put for men that are set in power and dignity, and because of that glory and excellency wherewith God is pleased eminently to adorn them. Though libertines reproach them as inglorious and fools in Israel, yet the Holy Ghost, foreseeing what spirits would arise in gospel times, calls them dignities and higher powers in respect of their superiority and pre-eminence above others, and in respect of those glorious gifts and endowments which God adorns them withal, whereby they are fitted for an honourable, fruitful, and faithful discharge of their office; as wisdom to discern between good and evil, clear apprehension, magnanimity, and zeal. Thus, even Saul, when he was made a king, was said to be another man, *i.e.*, he was adorned with prudence, clemency, magnanimity, and other princely virtues fit for his place, 1 Sam. x. 9; and so was David, 1 Sam. xvi. 13. These are the light and glory of a land, of whom we may say, as the people did of David, that he was worth ten thousand of them, 2 Sam. xviii. 3, and xxi. 17.

14. Nails and pins, upon which all the burden hangs, and therefore they have need to be fastened in a sure place, keeping close to the rule of the word; never till then will they be a glorious throne to their Father's house, Isa. xxii. 23. Now the magistrate is compared to a nail fastened in a wall,

(1.) For stability and firmness. As a nail driven into a wall sticks fast, so God will establish and confirm the power of magistracy, that it shall be no more removed than a nail that is driven up to the head; which may be matter of singular comfort to all faithful magistrates, who must look to encounter with many difficulties and indignities from an ungrateful world. But he that hath called them to their honour will keep them there, and fix them with his own hand, whilst they walk in his fear, doing justice and judgment, Prov. xxix. 14.

(2.) In respect of utility. As a nail that is fastened in a wall is fit for many uses, so a faithful magistrate is many ways beneficial to the people where God hath fixed him; and as pins do fasten tents, so these help to fix us in our places in peace, in despite of oppressors, Zech. x. 4; and as the beams of a building are fastened and

dum necessariis instruere; ita ut unctionis vox duo complectatur. 1. Destinationem seu vocationem ad aliquod munus. 2. Donorum ad munus illud exequendum necessariorum collationem.—*Ravanellus.*

[1] Δόξαι, gloriæ.

united by nails one to another, so magistracy is a means to unite people together in society and amity.

(3.) In respect of the weighty labours that lie upon him. We know every one is apt to clap somewhat upon a nail or pin. Arms, utensils, vessels, great and small, we use to hang upon the wall. So the magistrate is usually loaded with employment; every one comes to him for support, defence, and succour. They lay and leave their loads with him; all the necessary utensils of the house hang on this nail. Upon it hang vessels small as well as great; justice is, or ought to be, as large as Solomon's wisdom, which extended to the hyssop, as well as to the cedar: Isa. xxii. 24, 'They shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, and all the vessels of small quantity,' even little cups as well as great flagons. All affairs, great and small, and all the weight of the commonwealth shall hang on him from the highest to the lowest. The glory of a nation hangs on the nail of government.

15. Corner-stones, which laid in the foundation do uphold the building. The main stress lies on the corner-stones: Zech. x. 4, 'Out of him shall come the corner.' What is that? Why, the word is a metaphor, commonly used for governors and magistrates, 1 Sam. xiv. 38; Judges xx. 2, where the chief of the people, in the fountain, are called the corners of the people.[1] As Christ is the corner-stone on which the church stands, Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 6; so the magistrate, under God, helps to uphold the commonwealth.

(2.) These help to unite the building and keep it together that it fall not asunder. As stones laid in the corner of a building, where two walls meet, are thereby united, strengthened, and supported; so magistrates are the stay and strength of a place, Isa. xix. 13, they are the strong towers and bulwarks of a state. It is true, all the stones in the building do conduce to the upholding of it, but the main weight of all lies on the corner-stones; draw out these, and the building cannot stand.[2] As Samson's strength lay in his locks, so doth the strength of a state in these.

(3.) As it is an uniting, so it is also an adorning-stone; it is an ornament to the building, because there is more labour spent in polishing the corner-stone, than in the ordinary stones of the building, Ps. cxliv. 12. Magistrates are usually endowed with more choice parts and gifts than others, as I have shewed before.

[1] Phinah, angulus exterior ædificii, et per metaph. princeps qui est robur populi. —*Leigh.*

[2] Angulus metaphorice vocatur princeps, qui rempublicam continet, stringit, prospicit et roborat, ut angulus utrumque parietem in domo.—*Jerome.*

16. Shields of the earth, Ps. xlvii. 9; Isa. xxi. 5; Jer. li. 11, those which we call rulers, the original calls shields and bucklers,[1] Hosea iv. 18. Magistrates, like shields, should protect God's sabbaths, ordinances, and people in their lives and estates from the violence of those sons of Belial which labour to bring all into confusion that they may the better enjoy their own lusts. A shield is for preservation; it is a kind of partition-wall between a man and danger, it bears all the darts that are thrown at us.[2] When judgments are abroad, they should, with Moses, Joshua, and David, by prayer, wrestle with God, and lie in the breach to turn away God's anger from them; then God will be *scutorum scutum*, a shield of defence to such shields of the earth.

Government is that staff of beauty with which God protects his people, Zech. xi. 7; it is called a beautiful staff for the profit and comfort which comes to us by it. As the shepherd's staff is for direction, correction, defence, and support, even so is government. 1. It directs a man that is willing to live in order, what to do, and what to shun; 2. It corrects him that will not be ruled; 3. It defends the poor and oppressed, and is a support to him who is wearied out with hard dealing from men.

17. Angels, for wisdom, purity, righteousness, and majesty. As the angels are God's messengers, always ready to execute his will, so magistrates must be prompt and ready to defend the good, and punish the wicked according to God's commandment, 2 Sam. iv. 17, 20, and xix. 27.

18. The foundations of the earth, Ps. xi. 3, and lxxxii. 5; Micah vi. 2, 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' When there is no law for lewd and loose men, what can the righteous do but glorify God by mourning for the things which they cannot mend, and yet comforting themselves with this: ver. 5, 'That the Lord is still in his holy temple, and hath his throne in heaven,' *q.d.*, though all be in confusion, and we can see no help on earth, yet we will look unto God for aid, who sees and considers the sorrows of his people, and who can and will help them, when men will not. Magistrates, under God, are a special means to uphold the world, and keep it from running into confusion; hence they are called Adonai, from Eden, basis,[3] Gen. xlv. 8; Isa. xxii. 18, because like a foundation they uphold the building. Hence rulers and valiant men are called bars, Hosea xi. 6—we read it branches, the original

[1] Sit princeps clypeus, non malleus.

[2] See more in Dr Reynold's Assize Sermon on Ps. xlvii. *ult.*

[3] Βασιλεὺς quasi *βάσις τοῦ λαοῦ*, fulcrum et fundamentum populi.

will bear both—which help to fasten our gates; and as the ark was carried with bars, so the weight of the commonwealth lieth on these.[1]

19. Signets or sealing-rings, which are near and dear to us, being continually worn by us, Jer. xxii. 24; Hag. ii. 23. With these we seal our choicest secrets, and ratify what we would keep safe, wearing them as an ornament on our right hand, and giving them as monuments to our intimate friends. Thus Pharaoh gives Joseph his ring, Gen. xli. 42, and Ahasuerus gives Haman, his darling, a ring, Esther iii. 10. So the prodigal, when he was restored to honour and freedom from his swinish kind of life, had a ring given him by his father as a testimony of his intimate love to him, Luke xv. 22. In these also the Jews did inscribe some name or character of that which they held most precious; hence the spouse desires of Christ, that he would set her as a seal on his heart, *i.e.*, that he would further assure her of his love and confirm it to her, that she might be kept safe from her enemies, and never be forgotten by him,[2] Cant. viii. 6. By all this we see God's tender care over magistrates, and how he accounts himself honoured by them; they are as a signet on his right hand to him when they build his house, promote his worship, and defend his people. Though they may be contemptible in the eyes of the sons of Belial, yet they are precious and lovely in God's eye.

20. Captains, guides, overseers, and watchmen,[3] 1 Sam. ix. 17; Ps. cxxvii. 1; Prov. vi. 7; Mat. x. 18; Acts vii. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 14. As ministers are guides and bishops in an ecclesiastical sense, because they must see to the flock that is committed to their charge, Acts xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 7, 17, and lead them both by their light and lives; so magistrates are bishops and overseers of the people in a political sense, and must use all means that their people under them may live in peace and piety.[4]

21. A rock, a covert and hiding-place from storms and tempests, Isa. xxxii. 2; Ezek. xxviii. 16; Nahum ii. 5 .A man, *i.e.*, a king, shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment, ver. 1. viz., Hezekiah and his princes, yea, all employed under any

[1] Badim proprie rami sunt arborum densiores et crassiores, parandis vectibus idonei, unde quidam vertunt Vectes ejus.—*Rivet.*

[2] Ponere aliquem ut sigillum brachio vel cordi suo, est eum summe in pretio habere, vehementissime amare, arctissime sibi adjungere, studiosissime curare, fovere, custodire ac tueri.—*Ravanellus.*

[3] Ἡγεμόνες, duces et præsides.

[4] Vos estis episcopi in ecclesia; ego extra ecclesiam sum constitutus, dixit Constantinus Imper.

of these;[1] for the meanest in places of authority participate, according to their measure, of that which is here said of the highest; every one that is set above others may, and must some way, be a shelter and refreshing to the afflicted. This the four ensuing metaphors do excellently imply, setting forth the beauty and benefit of government. 1. Rulers shall be a hiding-place and covert; these are words of latitude, implying any kind of shelter. By the first we may understand a wall, a high bank, a thick hedge, or great tree, to any of which we creep in a windy day; by the latter may be meant a house or haven to save us from storms either upon land or sea. Wind imports lesser evil, annoying us; tempests, greater mischiefs, quite overwhelming us.[2] Both these metaphors shew that protection is part of good government. In the other two there is a further thing. 1. Refreshment in inward drought, by rivers of waters, which are very precious in deserts; 2. In outward scorching heat, by the shadow of a great rock, both most comfortable and reviving to the languishing and tired traveller, almost ready to die for thirst, or melted with the burning heat of the sun, in those spacious plains and uninhabitable deserts. This text alludes to gospel times, and is fitly applied to Christ, but in the letter it relates to rulers and magistrates, as Hezekiah and his under-officers.[3]

Now all these titles of honour God hath given to magistrates to encourage them against those discouragements which they are sure to meet withal in the faithful discharge of their duty.

2. It should teach us to lament the loss of good magistrates. If he that hath lost a good father, friend, guardian, &c., cannot but mourn; how great then should our mourning be for the loss of a gracious prince, in whom all those titles of love and respect do concentre and meet. When good Josiah was dead, what bitter lamentation did the people make, 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25. 1. All Judah and Jerusalem mourn for him; 2. It is with a great mourning; the lamentation for him is put as the highest precedent of mourning, Zech. xii. 11. Great losses call for great lamentation. The loss of godly magistrates and godly ministers are great losses, and therefore the saints lay them deeply to heart. When Moses was dead, the people mourned for him thirty days, Deut. xxxiv. 8; when Samuel died, all Israel mourned for him, 1 Sam. xxv. 1; yea, when

[1] Hezekias erit ut latebra, rivus, umbra.

[2] Rex pius est murus a vento, Portus in tempestate, Rivus in siti, Umbraculum in æstu; hæc multo abundantius præstitit Christus, cujus typus erat Hezekias populo suo graviter afflicto atque jactato a vento vehementiori, a graviori siti, ab ardentiori æstu.—*Sanctius in locum.*

[3] Hæc historice de Hezekia, allegorice de Christo dicuntur.—*Aquinas.*

a Saul, a wicked king, and David's enemy too, was dead, yet see how he laments his fall, and makes a panegyric or funeral oration in his praise, 2 Sam. i. 17, &c. So good ministers are spiritual fathers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, and therefore we should lay to heart their deaths, Num. xx. 19; 2 Kings xiii. 14; Acts viii. 2; and the rather because it is the sins of the people that provoke the Lord in wrath many times to remove godly magistrates and ministers from amongst us.

3. Those titles of dignity do shew magistrates their duty. Let no man glory in empty titles, but labour to answer them in obedience.[1] Let your lives and your names answer each other. Remember that God hath given you magistratical gifts, not for yourselves, but for the good of others, and to him you must shortly give an account of all the talents which he hath intrusted you withal. Hearken not then to flatterers, who would puff you up by telling you that you are gods, and sons of the Most High, and therefore you may do what you please, you are to account to none but God: 'Where the word of a king is, there is power; and none may say unto him, What doest thou?' Eccles. viii. 4; and Samuel tells the people, say these court parasites, that kings have absolute power over the lives and estates of their subjects, 1 Sam. viii. 11–18. Thus they make kings glad with their lies, Hosea vii. 3, and are the worst sort of beasts; for whereas other beasts prey upon dead carcases, those devour men alive.

As for that text, Eccles. viii. 4, the meaning is, that where the word of a king is, there is power—viz., to punish such as do evil—and none can call him to an account for so doing; and in this sense none may say unto him, What dost thou? else the wicked actions of kings may be, yea, and have been, reproved. Nathan reproved David, saying, What hast thou done? Elijah reproved Ahab for his murder, saying, What hast thou done? It is only God's prerogative royal to do whatsoever pleaseth him, and to be accountable to none: none may say unto him, What dost thou? Dan. iv. 35. The greatest men in the world are, or should be, under law. It is not for any man to say, *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas*, My will's my law. No, kings themselves must read and rule by law,[2] Deut. xvii.

2. As for that text in Samuel, it is the threatening of a judg-

[1] Ut inveniantur in opere, quod signantur in nomine. Non sunt hic inanium figmentorum, sed rerum verissimarum tituli.—*Musculus.*

[2] Nulla potentia fida est, si sit nimia.—*Sen.* Tyrannus dicitur *ἀνευπέυθυνος*—*i.e.*, liber et immunis a reddendis rationibus.—*Arist. Polit.*, lib. iv.

ment, and not the imposition of a duty—*q.d.*, This people shall dearly rue the casting off that form of government which I have given them;[1] for I will give them a king in my wrath that shall deal like a tyrant with them, taking away their goods and cattle from them by violence, and making slaves of them and theirs, as the kings of the nations whom they desire to be like have done to their subjects, ver. 9, 11. Samuel tells them, this will be the manner of your king. The court bishops render it, *jus regis*, the right of the king, and thereupon inferred that all the subject had was in the power of the king, and lay at his mercy.[2] But *Misphat hammelech* doth not here signify right, or what kings *de jure* ought to do, but what *de facto* they would do, to satisfy their lusts of ambition and covetousness.[3] This will be their custom; (for so the word is rendered, Gen. xl. 23; Exod. xxi. 9; 1 Sam. ii. 13; yet that did not justify the wickedness of the priests) not right; for if kings might lawfully do all that is here set down, then Ahab had not sinned in taking away Naboth's vineyard by violence from him:[4] but this is expressly forbidden, Ezek. xlvi. 18, and God punished Ahab for it, 2 Kings xxi. 18; but the Lord commands the king to study his law, and to rule according to it,[5] Deut. xvii. 16–18, and xxii. 37, which is directly contrary to this *jus regis;* for there the Lord commands the king not to multiply horses, ver. 16; but here it is said he will do it, ver. 11. The Lord commands that he should not covet riches, Deut. xvii. 17; but here it is said, ver. 14, that he will get their fields and vineyards from them, and take their cattle and children from them, ver. 14–17.

Caution.—Yet this doth not debar rulers from a legal right over the persons and estates of men, both in times of war and peace, provided they exercise it in a lawful manner—viz., for the promoting of the public good, and the defence of the laws, religion, and peace of the land.[6]

[1] Deus hoc jus nec sancit, nec approbat, sed tantum prædicit, ejusque acerbitatem graphice depingit, ut eos a petitione regis avellat.—*A Lapide.*

[2] Jus regis dicitur quod a rege non pro suo officio, sed per suo arbitrio; non pro æquitate, sed pro voluntate institutum est.—*Mendoza in locum.*

[3] Non hic depingitur quid reges jure possint, sed quid audeant, et pro suprema potestate quam habere se putant, contra naturæ leges et omnem humanitatem tyrannice decernant.—*Sanctius.*

[4] Cum leges præscripsisti aliis, præscripsisti et tibi; siquidem naturalis æquitas postulat ut idem jus omnibus ex æquo reddatur.—*Ambrosius ad Valentin.*, Epist. 32.

[5] Princeps dependet a lege naturæ, divina et fundamentali; quatenus homo est, dicitur observare legem naturæ; quatenus Christianus, legem divinam; quatenus princeps, legem fundamentalem.—*Maccovius.*

[6] Distinguendum est inter temerariam regis cupiditatem et reipublicæ utilitatem ac necessitatem. Si rex privatâ libidine et habendi cupiditate impulsus talia sibi

Now, as the magistrate must take heed of Anabaptists on the one hand, who offend in defect, and give him too little; so he must take heed of court clawbacks, who offend in excess, and give him too much.[1] They make a god and an idol of him for their own ends, obeying his commands against God's commands, and preferring great men's wills before God's holy word.[2] Those cry up kings as gods, calling them omnipotent, unlimited, independent, not to be questioned by any authority, &c. Thus the Arminians,[3] to curry favour with great ones, and the better to suppress synods, super-superlatively extolled the power of the magistrate in ecclesiastical affairs; and this is the policy of many sectaries in our days to cry up magistracy, that they may the better cry down presbytery, which they know would curb their errors and profaneness. Thus Erastus, a physician, but a rotten divine, puts all church censures into the hand of the magistrate, and so confounds magistracy and ministry together, which are two distinct offices, having distinct bounds and duties belonging to them, which they may not transgress, upon pain of God's displeasure. If Uzziah the king will be so bold as to offer sacrifice, which belonged to the priest, let him expect a leprosy for his pains, 2 Chron. xxvi. 18–22.

See the Erastian tenets fully confuted by the learned Rutherford's Divine Right of Church Government, chap. vi. q. 2, pp. 257–647, and in his Due Right of Presbytery, *in fine*, chap. vi. p. 387, &c.; Gillespy's Aaron's Rod Blossoming, *per totum;* The Vindication of the Presbyterian Government, by the Province of London, pp. 8, 9, &c.; Walæus's Loc. Com., pp. 2, 3, and 73; Apollonius's Jus Magistratus circa sacra.

4. Magistrates must take heed of dishonouring their honourable calling by profane practices. Their lives should be an epitome of their laws. They are apt to call for duty and reverence; but let them do their duty to God, and honour him, and then he hath

vendicat, injuste ac tyrannice agit; sed si reipublicæ salute et utilitate id exigente, talia postulat, regia sua potestate merito utitur. 2. Distinguendum inter rem et rei modum. Si rex in hisce exigendis modum justum ac legitimum servet, et absque violentia operas, decimas et tributa pro regni sui statu ac necessitate exigat, non potest dici tyrannus; si vero modum necessarium et legitimum fuerit egressus, et ex subditorum incommodo suum duntaxat quærat commodum, potestate sua abutitur. —*Gerhard de Magistr.*

[1] Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt.—*Horat.*

[2] Domitianus jubebat de se scribi, Dominus et Deus noster sic fieri jubet.—*Suetonius.*

[3] Errores Arminii qui coram suprema curia detecti essent, ne ecclesiis patefierent, omnibus modis allaboravit.—*Pezel. Melif. Hist.*, pp. 1196, 1203; *Walæus Loc. Com.* tom. ii. p. 17.

promised to honour them; but if they suffer God's name to be blasphemed, and his worship, day, and servants to be despised, he will cause them to be despised, he will pour contempt on such princes,[1] Job xii. 21; Ps. lxxvi. 12. If Eli's sons be vile, it is because they made themselves so by their wickedness, 1 Sam. iii. 13. The loose lives of rulers doth detract from their authority. As a wicked minister cannot, with comfort and confidence, reprove another for those crimes of which he himself is notoriously guilty, so a wicked, swearing, drunken magistrate cannot with comfort punish another for those sins which reign in himself. We princes, said Queen Elizabeth,[2] are set, as it were, upon stages in the sight and view of all the world; the least spot is soon spied in our garments, a blemish quickly noted in our doings: it behoves us, therefore, to be careful that our proceedings be just and honourable. As ministers in their calling, so magistrates in theirs, are God's ambassadors, and represent his person; and therefore they must do nothing unbeseeming their great Lord and Master. Since God condescends so far as to gift them and grace them with his own name, they must walk like gods on earth. As Alexander said to one of his name, *Aut fortiter pugna, aut nomen depone:* Either fight like Alexander, or never bear his name;[3] so say I, either act like God, or never bear his name. Rule as God would rule, judge as God would judge, punish as God would punish, and reward as he would reward. As he hath given you more power and opportunities of honouring him than he hath done to others, so he expects more from you than he hath done from others; for men to be called gods, and yet fight against God, to make laws against his laws, to use, or rather to abuse, their power against that God that gave it, this is to be gods in name, but devils indeed.[4] What! gods, and be drunken? gods, and take bribes? gods, and be cruel and covetous? &c. Hell is full of such gods. To such we may say, as Naomi said sometimes in another case, Ruth i. 20, 'Call me no more Naomi'—*i.e.*, beautiful—'but call me Marah,' bitter.

[1] How men abuse their authority, see Downam's Warfare, lib. ii. cap. 11, pp. 486, 487.

[2] *Vide* Camden's Queen Elisab., English, p. 325.

[3] *Nomen inane crimen immane,* An empty name is a great shame. Loco ignominiæ est dignitas in indigno, tanquam simia in tecto.—*Seneca.*

[4] Qua fiducia iniquitatem in tribunal suum admittent quod Dei viventis thronum esse audiunt? qua audacia injustam sententiam eo ore pronuntiabunt quod divinæ veritati designatum esse organum intelligunt? Qua conscientia in impia decreta subscribent ea manu quam ad perscribenda Dei acta sciunt ordinatum?—*Calvin. Instit.,* lib. iv. cap. 20, sec. 6.

So say I, call those no more gods and governors, but call them beasts and devils.

Quest. But what must magistrates do that they may resemble God, whose name they bear?

Ans. They must labour to resemble him in nine particulars:

1. In wisdom; 2. Simplicity; 3. Impartiality; 4. Clemency; 5. Patience; 6. Tenderness to the poor, God's name and worship, and God's ministers; 7. In searching into causes; 8. Judging justly; 9. Doing good to all.

1. They must get wisdom and dexterity in their calling. As ministers, Mal. ii. 7, so magistrates should be men of knowledge, Deut. i. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 12, able to discern between good and evil, that they may rightly time and circumstantiate their actions, Eccles. viii. 5, and thereby uphold the state,[1] Prov. xxix. 2. David was wise as an angel of the Lord, 2 Sam. xiv. 17. Ezra must appoint none for judges but such as know the law, Ezra vii. 25. It is an art of arts, and a science of sciences, even one of the hardest works in the world, rightly to rule men.[2] He had need be an Argus, or like the ring in Ezekiel's wheels, full of eyes, Ezek. i. 18; another Janus, to look forward and backward, that he be not surprised.[3] Men are witty in wickedness, and subtle to smooth over bad causes with fair pretences;[4] so that, if the magistrate be not a very wise, judicious, experimental man, they will easily escape the sword of justice: hence Solomon is commended for asking wisdom, 1 Kings iii. 9. It is well observed, that Rome saw her best days under her most learned kings and emperors, as Numa, Augustus, Titus, Constantine, Theodosius, &c. An ignorant ruler is like a blind pilot, that lets the vessel be ruined on rocks and sands.[5] Hence it is set down as a sore judgment when princes are children, and babes rule over men, Isa. iii. 4, 5; not children in years, but children in discretion: then men fall to oppressing and wronging one another. As bodily physicians, so state physicians should have

[1] Superiores sint qui superiores esse sciunt.—*Bern.* See Dr Seaman's Ser. on 1 Kings iii. 9, preached 1644, p. 22.

[2] Ars est difficillima recte gubernare rempublicam; nullum enim animal homine morosius.

[3] Quantum prudentiæ, integritatis, mansuetudinis, continentiæ et innocentiæ studium debet esse in iis, qui divinæ justitiæ ministros se esse norunt?—*Calvin.*

[4] Ps. lviii. 2, and xciv. 20; Job xiii. 4; Jer. v. 26. Sinners are impudent, and innocency is modest, and ofttimes uneloquent. Quo honestior conscientia, iis plerumque frons imbecillior.—*Jerome.*

[5] Plato could say, Felices fore respublicas, si vel studia sapientiæ consectentur reges, vel sapientes imperent. Illas respublicas beatas fore in qua juvenum hastæ, senum consilia pollent, dixit Plutarch.

an eagle's eye, a lion's heart, and a lady's hand.[1] Such as rule others, had need to be well instructed themselves, that so they may see with their own eyes. It is dangerous for church and state when the governors of it are ignorantly led by others, and cannot judge of the things which are propounded to them.[2] Hence it is that the Lord would have them to write, read, and study his word, that they might be able to rule according to it, Deut. xvii. 18 which made Jehoiada, the high priest, at the inauguration of king Joash, to deliver the testimony or book of the law unto him, 2 Kings xi. 12, that by observing the precepts and precedents there recorded, he might rule accordingly. He must know God's law, and he had need to know the laws of the land too; else how will he be able to determine according to law if he do not know the law? The Scripture is the best counsellor for the greatest statesman in the world. This is the way to make him prosper,[3] Joshua i. 8. To this end they should get godly and learned counsellors about them, that they may be able to resolve their doubts, and direct them in God's paths. It is of great consequence for princes to have a Joseph, a Nehemiah, a Nathan, a Daniel about them. Whilst Jehoiada the priest lived, who was a pious and a learned man, it went well with king Joash and all his kingdom, 2 Kings xii. 2; but when that good man was dead, all went to ruin. As a minister must not be a novice, lest he fall into temptations, so a magistrate had need to be an experimental, well-seasoned piece, that he fall not into snares; and as a minister should have somewhat in him more than an ordinary man,—*ex quovis ligno non fit Mercurius*,[4]—ignorant logs become not thrones and pulpits; so a magistrate should have something in him that is eminent and exemplary, and something of an orator,[5] whereby he may persuade to goodness, recall men from wickedness, commend the virtuous, disgrace the vicious, comfort the comfortless, and exhort men to virtue. Julius Cæsar got the empire, and held it, by arms and letters. Hence he is painted standing upon the globe of the world, holding

[1] Justitia sit cœca in exequendo, oculata in dijudicando.

[2] Debet magistratus summus religionem quam defendendam suscipit, etiam cognoscere, in eam inquirere, de ea judicare, eamque prius judicio suo non tantum apprehensivo, sed etiam discretivo comprobare, &c.—*Homus*, Disput. 30, 156; *ubi plura*.

[3] See Mr Strong, 31 Ser., p. 617.

[4] See more on ver. 5.

[5] *Vide* Langii Polyanth. de Magistratu, q. 10, 11, *mihi*, pp. 1666, 1667. *Vide* D. Hall's Solomon's Politics, vol. i. p. 211, folio. *Vide* Moll. Histor. Observat., chap. ii.

in his left hand a book, and in his right a sword, with this motto: *Ex utroque Cæsar*, Emperor by both.

2. In simplicity. God mingles with nothing; he is free from the mixture of a private or passionate spirit.[1] So should rulers be pure gold without any dross, as much as in them lies, of sinful anger, malice, fear, or hatred, Isa. i. 25, 26; he that cannot rule himself is unfit to rule others.

3. Impartially. As God is no respecter of persons, but punisheth sin wherever he finds it, be it in rich or poor, 2 Chron. xix. 7; Job xxxiv. 19; Acts x. 34; Rom. ii. 11; Gal. ii. 6, so rulers must imitate and follow him in their measure and degree. Thus Amaziah did justice on those that killed his father; he did not protect them by his prerogative, 2 Kings xiv. 5; and Asa deposed his own mother for her idolatry.[2]

4. In clemency, pity, and mercy. God is pitiful even to the rebellious, and loath, if by any means it might be prevented, to destroy them, Ps. lxviii. 18; Hosea xi. 8. He is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, but is slow to anger, though he be great in power.

In this the gods on earth must imitate the God of heaven.[3] They must not oppress their brethren, Ezek. xlv. 8, nor rule over them with rigour, Lev. xxv. 43. They must not be like roaring lions and evening wolves, which leave not the bones till the morning,[4] Zeph. iii. 3, but they must consider that they rule over men and not beasts, and therefore they must deal tenderly and mercifully with them, that they may get the affections of their people, which is the best upholder of the throne, Prov. xx. 28. David by loving compellations wins the people's hearts,[5] 2 Chron. x. 7. 'Hear, my brethren and my people.' So Theodosius, by his loveliness and clemency, gained many kingdoms. The Goths, after the death of their own king, beholding his temperance, patience, and virtue, gave themselves up to his government.[6] When Cicero would claw

[1] Nec timidi, nec tumidi. Male irato ferrum committitur; debet omni perturbatione liber accedere ad rem summa diligentia tractandam, potestatem vitæ necisque. —*Seneca, lib. de Ira*, cap. 16.

[2] Of this see more in ver 2.

[3] Sic piger ad pœnas princeps, ad præmia velox:
Nam virtus magnos hæc facit una Deos.

[4] Ideoque, Scipio laudatur, qui malle se unum servare civem, quam mille occidere dixit.

[5] Benevolentia populi erga principem est tutissimum illius munimentum.—*Gerhard. Vide Taffyn of Amendment*, lib. iii. sec. 51, p. 378. Diligi princeps, nisi ipse diligat, non potest.—*Pliny.* Joshua vii. 19.

[6] *Vide* Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. v. cap. 26, and Orosius, lib. vii. cap. 34. Duo sunt

Cæsar, he tells him that his valour and victories were common with the rest of his soldiers, but his clemency and goodness were wholly his own. Nero, in the beginning of his reign, when he was to set his hand to the sentence of condemnation, would say, *Utinam nescirem literas!* I wish my hand could not now write![1]

Rigour breeds rebellion. Rehoboam, by his cruelty, lost ten tribes in one day, 1 Kings xii. 16. Choose, then, rather to offend on the merciful hand, since it is much safer to account for mercy than for cruelty.[2] Let the sword of justice be furbished with the oil of mercy, though there be cases wherein severity must be used; for we must beware of foolish pity, which ofttimes is mere cruelty, both to thyself, it may cost thee thy life to spare the lives of those whom God hath sentenced unto death; we must not be more merciful than the rule which God sets us,[3] 1 Sam. xv. 9; 1 Kings xxi. 19.

And secondly, To the party offending. Impunity breeds impenitency; it hardens men in their sin, and ofttimes brings them to a second murder, which the indulgent magistrate becomes accessory to. When one told the king of France that such a one had committed a third murder, No, said one, he hath committed but one murder, the other two are the king's; for if he had not pardoned him he had killed but one.

Thirdly, It is injurious to the state to spare murderers, witches, and blasphemers; the guilt of those crimes lies on the whole land, and cannot be set off but by doing justice on the offenders, Num. xxxv. 33.

5. In patience. God bears long with the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, Rom. ix. 22; he doth not presently cut off rebellious sinners, but waits long for their amendment.

So magistrates had need to be men of much patience, to undergo those burdens, affronts, and injuries which they must expect, if they be faithful, from an ungrateful world; as we see in Moses, though a holy, meek, wise man, and one that had brought the people

nomina, homo et peccator.—*Aug.* As a malefactor, punish him; as a man, pity him.

[1] *Vide* Pezelii Melefic. Hist., p. 336, folio. Plura clementiæ exempla invenies apud Valer Max., lib. v. cap. 1, p. 417, edit. *ult. et opt.* Multos timere debet, quem multi timent.—*Sen.*

[2] Prima principis dos clementia.—*Calvin.*

[3] Rex apum aculeum non habet, vel certe eo non utitur; exemplar hoc magnis regibus ingens.—*Plin. Nat. Hist.*, cap. 17. Caveat magistratus ne aut nimia severitate vulneret magis quam medeatur, aut superstitiosa clementiæ affectatione in crudelissimam incidat humanitatem.—*Calv.* Maxima peccandi est illecebra impunitatis spes.—*Cicero.*

through many straits; yet, when any new trouble came, they were ready to murmur and fly upon him. It was a good saying of Theodosius, If any man speak evil of the emperor, if it be of lightness, it is to be contemned; if of madness, to be pitied; if of injury, to be remitted.[1] As he must in some cases use the sword,[2] so in some cases, especially in his own, it is his glory to bear and forbear, Prov. xix. 11.

6. In tenderness. (1.) To the poor. As God takes care of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, who have none to take care for them, Ps. lxviii. 5, so the magistrate, who hath power, must be a defence to those who have no power to defend themselves. But of this more, ver. 3, 4.

(2.) God is very tender over his people; they are the apple of his eye, which is *oculus oculi*, tender, and the glory of the eye; the signet on his right hand, his jewels, his portion, his pleasant portion, &c.; so magistrates must be very tender over them. The world is apt to wrong them, and trample upon them by reason of the church's weakness; and therefore she is compared to a vine, a dove, a widow, a sheep, which cannot subsist long without a defence and support; and if magistrates neglect their duty, yet God will never fail his people, but will reprove kings for their sakes; and though his church be weak, yet her enemies shall know that her Redeemer is strong, Jer. l. 34.

(3.) God is very tender over his own name, day, worship, ordinances, and ministers, &c.

So magistrates, as they are God's deputies, must especially look to the things of God.[3] As God hath exalted them, so he expects they should exalt his name and worship. It will be the honour of their honours so to do. This was the glory of those godly kings of Israel, that they made it their chief care to promote God's worship, and to abolish all the monuments of idolatry. David saw to the ordering of God's worship, that it might be kept from confusion, 1 Chron. xxiii. 24, 25, 29. Jehoshaphat sent his princes with the priests to see idolatry abolished, and the truth settled, 2 Chron. xvii. 7–9. Hezekiah purgeth the temple, 2 Kings xviii. Josiah and Asa cast down idols, and restored the worship of God, 2 Kings xxxiv.

[1] Magni est animi in summa potentia injurias pati, nec quicquam est gloriosius principe impune læso.—*Senecca de Clement.*, lib. i.

[2] Aut fer aut feri; ne feriare feri.

[3] Prima magistratus cura debet esse religionem veram promovere, et impietatem prohibere.—*Ames. C. Confes.*, lib. v. cap. 25, q. 2.

Many would have the magistrate to defend men in their temporals, and see to the backs and bellies of people, as if he were some butcher or ox-herd, some Turk and Tartar that never heard of God; but as for religion, saith the revived Donatist of these times, that concerns not the magistrate, he must not once meddle with that, whereas this should be his chiefest care.[1] That which we must chiefly pray for, that should be his chiefest care; but the great request of God's people is, that they may lead godly as well as peaceable lives under magistrates, 1 Tim. ii. 2; hence it is that they are commanded to kiss the Son, obey his commands, advance his kingdom, and promote his worship.[2] Even Aristotle could say that, among other things, the magistrate ought to see to the worship of the gods, and that their holy things be kept from violation.[3] Mr Perkins speaks well to this point. The magistrates, saith he, look to peace and civil order; it is well done, and it is their duty, yet not the principal; and they do commonly fail in this, that they use not the sword for this end, to urge men to the keeping of the commandments of the first table, to a practice of pure religion, and to the keeping of the Sabbath-day. This is the main duty of the magistrate, who bears the sword especially for the good of men's souls. Thus that worthy and eminent light of England.[4]

That magistrates ought to have a special care of religion, see Davenant de Judice fidei, p. 91, &c.; Musculus Loc. Com. de Mag. mihi, p. 630, folio; D. Gouge, his Arrows, on Exod. xvii. 15, sec. 74, p. 323; Mr Marshal's Sermon on 1 Tim. ii. 2; Taffyn on Amendment of Life, lib. iii. cap. 6, p. 327; Gerhard de Magistrat., pp. 298, &c, 312, &c.; *Στερέωμα*, pp. 24, 25; Burrough's Irenicum, cap. 7; Cotton's Keys, pp. 25, 53; D. Bolton's Arraignment of Error, p. 312–348.

2. If men be obstinate, the magistrate may, and must compel them to keep the Sabbath, and to frequent the worship of God; though he cannot make them believe, yet he may make them hear.[5] Parents may and ought to do thus much, and why not magistrates

[1] Nec princeps corpora tantum hominum curabit, et negliget animos; non enim armentarium aut subulcum principem fingimus, cui tantummodo venter, caro et cutis subditorum curæ sint.—*Apollon. Jus. Mag. Circa Sacra*, p. 106. Quid imperatori cum ecclesia? dixit Donatus.

[2] See seven reasons why magistrates should more especially pomote religion, in Mr Ant. Burgess's Sermon on Judges vi. 27, 28, p. 5, &c., preached 1645.

[3] See five reasons for this in Mr Jenkyn's Ser. on Ps. ii. 12, pp. 6, 7, preached 1656, and on Jude 8, obs. 4, p. 300, folio. *Vide* Arist. Polit., lib. vi. cap. 8.

[4] Perkin's Treatise of Callings, vol. i. p. 764.

[5] See Mr Rutherford's Due Rights of Presbyt., p. 352, *in fine libri.*

then? Exod. xx. 10. Though they cannot compel them to grace, yet they may to the means of grace.[1] The magistrate is *ensifer Dei*, God's sword-bearer; he must not bear or wear it for a show, Rom. xiii. 4, but draw it out, and use it according as God directs him in his word, bringing the wheel of justice over the heads of the wicked, Prov. xx. 8, 26. He must not be like a cypher, of no use but to fill a place; like St George on horseback, who sits with a drawn sword, but never stirs nor strikes. Nor like that log of wood which Jupiter threw amongst the frogs to be their king, which they soon trampled on with contempt. A magistrate couchant makes offenders rampant; sin and error lose nothing by indulgence; such ill weeds, if tolerated, grow apace.

3. If they be seducing heretics, he must punish them according to their demerits. Evil-doers are to be punished, that is confessed on all hands; but seducing heretics are evil-doers, Phil. iii. 2; 2 Pet. ii. 14. 2. Murder, adultery, theft, and suchlike works of the flesh must be punished, but heresy is spiritual murder, adultery, theft, and expressly called a work of the flesh, Gal. v. 19–21; and lest any should think that this was legal, it is plain that such ought to be punished even in gospel times, Zech. xiii. 3. The prophet there speaking of gospel times, tells us that he who speaks lies in the name of the Lord, shall die for it. 2. If they be idolaters or blasphemers, then it is *de jure naturæ*, agreeable even to natural light, and founded on reasons of immutable equity, as the glory of God, the good of his people, &c., that they should be punished, and so binds for ever. Job tells us that idolatry is a sin to be punished by the judges, Job xxxi. 27, 28. The Arminians and Socinians would have no heretics punished, or once molested by the magistrate,[2] that so themselves might escape in that crowd. But what mischief and confusion this would bring to church and state, I have elsewhere shewed at large.[3] Indulgence breeds insolence and impudence, as we have seen by sad experience. When judgment is not speedily executed on evil-doers, they are hardened and heightened in sin,[4] Eccles. viii. 11. Execution is the life of the law; it is the same in policy which elocution is in oratory, the first, second, third thing, it is all in all. When the woman came to Philip, king of Macedon, for justice, he answered, *Nolo*, I will

[1] Formido pœnæ licet non reddat justos, utilis tamen est et servit tranquillitati publicæ; dum conatus reproborum per illum coercentur.—*Musculus.*

[2] *Vide* Pezelii Harmon. Remonstr. et Socinian, art. 21, p. 252.

[3] See my Commentary on 2 Tim. iii. 8, pp. 168, 169.

[4] Impunitas incuriæ soboles, insolentiæ mater, radix impudentiæ, transgressionum nutrix.—*Bern. de Consid.*, lib. iv.

not; but she well replied, *Noli ergo regnare*, Lay aside your kingship then. So say I, will you not punish blasphemers and soul-murderers, then never bear the sword of justice. Either act like magistrates, or never bear the office; either discharge the duties of your place, or leave it to such as will; for shame let not blasphemy escape better than felony, let not a cut-purse die, and a blasphemer live. Do not punish him that speaks a word against you, and let him escape scot-free that speaks two against Christ. It is a sin to be calm and cold when God is blasphemed. When Servetus, that blasphemous heretic, charged Melanchthon with harshness in a dispute against him, he answered, *In aliis mitis sum; cum blasphematur nomen Christi, non ita.* I can be calm, said Melanchthon, in other cases, but not in blasphemy. And whereas many plead conscience for what they hold, it is against their conscience to renounce such errors and such heresies, Mr Burroughs shall answer them.[1]

1. An erroneous conscience doth not bind; you sin, notwithstanding your conscience bids you do it.

2. Whatsoever you hold, though conscience be never so much taken with it, if it destroy the power of godliness, if this man be in Christian society, after all means used to reduce him, if he still persevere in it, he is, notwithstanding his conscience, to be cast out. If poison be got into a glass, and you cannot wash it out, the poison and glass too is to be thrown into the sink.

3. If the error, with the profession of it, be destructive to the state, and he cannot be reclaimed, he may likewise be cut off from it, or at least be deprived of the privileges of it, and benefits by it, notwithstanding his plea of conscience. Thus he, who yet allows too much liberty in some cases.

Obj. This is persecution.

Ans. Not at all. It is justice, not persecution, to punish thieves and murderers. These spiritual thieves and murderers are the worst of sinners; others destroy but the estate or body, these kill souls.

2. It is Christian wisdom to kill serpents, wolves, foxes, bears, Cant. ii. 15.

3. It is love and compassion to the souls of the wicked, and may be a means to convert, or at least to restrain them, and so they may be the ministers of God for their good, not only civil, but spiritual; hence the magistrate is called an heir of restraint, Judges xviii. 7;

[1] *Vide* Burroughs' Irenicum, chap. 6, p. 34. *Vide* D. Bolton, Arraignment of Error, p. 337, &c.

there was no magistrate, or, as it is in the fountain, *joresh gnetzer*, there was no heir of restraint to repress sin, and restrain men from wickedness.[1] Thus Saul's reigning was called restraining, 1 Sam. ix. 17, because by his authority he restrained men from their licentious practices. When these curbs are gone, horses run wild, and people are like sons of Belial without a yoke.

4. It is an act of mercy to others, to keep them from infection; it is cruelty to the good to spare the bad.

5. Had these seducers and their followers power, they would be the greatest tyrants and persecutors in the world; witness John à Leyden and his fraternity.

6. I would have all mild and gentle means used before men proceed to judgment.[2] Care should be taken to inform their judgments, and convince them of their evil ways. The apostle is for two admonitions before church censure, Titus iii. 10, and the censure of the magistrate should not precede that of the church. And if they be heathens and infidels, the gentler we must deal with them, to win them to the faith, Titus iii. 2, 3. Abominable, then, is that cruelty of the papists, who by inhuman tortures would force the poor Indians to baptize their infants, and say as they say, and hold what they hold. All this is but a nullity; for as a forced marriage is no marriage, a forced profession is no profession.[3]

7. We must distinguish of persons and their errors: 1. Some are seducers, and offend through wilfulness; though they be convinced, yet they will not be convinced, but walk turbulently and disorderly, disquieting both church and state. These must be most sharply dealt withal.

2. Others are seduced and misled through weakness; these would be pitied.

Next we must distinguish of errors. 1. Some are about circum-

[1] Nemo pereat, nisi quem perire etiam percuntis intersit.—*Seneca.* Hæreticis obstinatis beneficium est morte multari; nam quo diutius vivunt, eo plures errores excogitant, plures pervertunt, et majorem sibi damnationem acquirunt.—*Musculus.* Hæres interdicti vel prohibitionis.—*Piscat.* He must restrain, 1. Idolaters; 2. Seducing sect-makers; 3. Vicious livers. *Vide* Mr Lyford's Ser. on Dan. iii. 14, pp. 7, 8, &c.

[2] Cuncta prius tentanda, &c. *Vide* Dr Bolton's Arraignment of Error, p. 334, &c.

[3] Ad fidem nullus infidelis cogendus est; nam ea suadenda, non imperanda; doctores non tortores adhibendi: monendo plus proficitur quam minando, docendo quam cædendo.—*Tilenus Syntag.*, p. 634. Quod cor non facit, non fit. See this question largely debated by Gerhard de Magist., p. 385, &c. Mr Cebbett of Magistracy. Mr Leigh in his prolegomena to his Body of Divinity, in fine. The author of the *Bloody Tenent* would have none punished. See him confuted by Mr Bedford against Antinom., p. 78, and Mr Cotton against Williams. Davenant de Judice, p. 72, and Tactica Sacra, lib. ii. cap. 2, sect. 11, p. 123, &c.

stantials and lesser matters, making no rent in church or state, and here the strong must bear with the weak, Rom. xv. 1; Eph. iv. 2; Gal. vi. 1. That friends might differ about the same things without breach of friendship, a very heathen affirms.[1]

2. Some errors are fundamental, and overthrow the very substantials and foundation of religion directly or indirectly, mediately or immediately. Thus Arians, Socinians, Antinomians, papists, publishing blasphemy to the disturbance of church and state; such turbulent idolaters and gross heretics,[2] as well as other gross offenders, may be punished with death, as appears, Exod. xxii. 20; Lev. xxiv. 16; Num. xv. 30, 31; Deut. xiii. 1–10; 1 Kings xviii. 40; 2 Kings xxiii. 20; Ezra vi. 11, and vii. 26; Dan. iii. 29. So saith Mr Perkins: The magistrate, who is the vicegerent of the Lord, is the keeper of both tables, and therefore is to maintain religion with the sword, and so may put to death atheists, which hold there is no God, of which sort there are many in these days; and heretics, which maliciously maintain and hold anything that overthrows the foundation of religion in the churches whereof they are members.[3] Had this good man lived in our days, he would have been censured by some for Perkins the persecutor; but wisdom is justified of her own children.

4. God is very tender over his ministers. None must touch his prophets to hurt them;[4] he takes the injuries done to them as done to himself. As they are subject to greater tentations, so they are under more special protection: he holds these stars in his right hand, Rev. ii. 1.

So magistrates should be very tender over the messengers of Christ, who are the best friends, if they be faithful, that princes have in the world. Magistracy and ministry, the word and the sword, should go together. The pulpit guards the throne; hence Nathan is called the friend of David, 1 Kings iv. 5; king Joram calls Elijah his father, 2 Kings vi. 21; and Jehoshaphat calls the

[1] Non eadem sentire duos de rebus iisdem, incolumi licuit semper amicitia. Magistratus propter solum hæreseos crimen non quenquam occidat, nisi forte horrendæ atque intolerandæ in Deum blasphemiæ, vel manifestæ seditionis crimen accedat.—*Hommius*, Disp. 31, sec. iv. p. 163.

[2] Pœna capitali puniri potest non qua erro, sed qua turbo.—*Prideaux*. Hæreticos, blasphemos et seductores capite mulctandos esse, multis argumentis probat doctis.—*Altingius*, problem 19, 20, and Zepper. de Lege Mosaica, lib. iv. cap. 3, p. 244.

[3] Perkins on the Creed, p. 194, vol. i. *Vide* Synopsis Purior. Theolog., Disp. 50, sec. 56. Willet's Synopsis, Controvers. 7, q. 2, p. 373, edit. *ult.*, and Mr Prin's Treatise of the Power of Magistracy, an excellent piece to this purpose, where all the Anabaptistic cavils are answered.

[4] Neque tactu oris, neque tactu cordis.

Levites his sons, 2 Chron. xxix. 11; and Hezekiah spake comfortable, delightful, pleasing words to the hearts of the Levites, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. The magistrate must protect their persons from violence, and their maintenance from the encroachment of cruel cormorants, lest, by famishing them, he bring a famine of the word upon the people. He must plant the word where it is wanting, and continue it where it is planted. It was well observed by Queen Elizabeth, when the justices of peace in the county of Suffolk met her Majesty in progress, every one of them having a minister by him, I see the reason now, saith the queen, why the county of Suffolk is better governed than other counties; it is because the word and the sword go together.[1] Then church and state are like to flourish when Moses and Aaron, Zerubbabel and Joshua, Zech. iv. 14, go hand in hand together. When the minister reproves sin, and the magistrate punisheth it; when the magistrate makes use of the minister's direction, and the minister enjoys the magistrate's protection; when Joshua joins with Eleazer, and David consults with Nathan and Gad, the prophets of the Lord; and Josiah with Huldah, and Uzziah with Zechariah the priest, then, and never till then, can we look to prosper, 2 Chron. xxvi. 5. It is Aaron's office to speak, but it is Moses's rod that works the wonders. Ministers must preach, and magistrates must punish offenders.

7. As God searcheth and inquireth into men's causes before he punish, and though he be the supreme and absolute judge of all the world, yet we find that he first cited Adam, and gave him a fair trial before ever he turned him out of paradise, Gen. iii. 9–20. He never proceeds to judgment till the fact be clear; though he had a cry come up to him concerning the blood of Abel and the wickedness of Sodom, yet he searcheth and examines the matter, to see if it be according to the report,[2] Gen. iv. 9–11, and xviii. 21; so the magistrate must be well advised what he doth, and ponder all circumstances, before he pass sentence. So did Job: chap. xxix. 16, 'The cause that I knew not, I searched out.' *Oyer* must go before *terminer*. First hear, and then determine. Nothing must be done rashly and unadvisedly, but upon serious and mature deliberation must they proceed to judgment, else the judge's temerity will prove the innocent person's calamity. As the physician, before

[1] O beatum populum in quo uno ore et uno animo utraque administratio ad sanctam communionem cum civili societate continendam et augendam conspiraverit! Non minuit illam hæc administratio, sed altera alteram stantem confirmat, labantem statuminat, collapsam erigit.—*Junius Eccles.*, lib. iii. cap. 5.

[2] Licet Deo omnia sint aperta, non tamen punivit audita sed visa.

he prescribes a receipt or diet to his patient, will first feel the pulse, view the urine, observe the temper and changes in the body, and inquire into the causes of the disease, that so he may apply a fit remedy suitable to the malady, so ought every magistrate, in causes of justice, to hear both parties with equal patience fully and fairly, to examine witnesses thoroughly, and to lay together all allegations, and give judgment accordingly.[1] Reports and probabilities are no sufficient ground; there must be a proof, and that by men approved, else a Jezebel may get false witnesses to accuse an innocent Naboth.

Judges must not first hang a man, and try him after; the law condemns no man till it have first heard what he can say for himself, John vii. 5; Acts xxv. 16. It is worth observing what a heap of words the Holy Ghost useth to make magistrates cautious in this kind. 1. They must search; 2. Inquire; 3. Diligently; 4. They must see that it be true and certain that such an abomination is wrought; 5. Then, and not till then, must they proceed to judgment, Deut. xiii. 14, xvii. 2, 4, and xix. 18; Judges xix. 30. Many cases are dark and difficult, and so cunningly contrived, that it is the king's honour to search it out, Prov. xxv. 2, as we see in Solomon, in that difficult case of the two mothers, 1 Kings iii. 16, 28. And if in lesser matters it be folly to answer a matter before it be heard, how much more in such weighty cases, Prov. xviii. 13. Judges especially must take heed what they do, 2 Chron. xix. 6, and therefore it was a great oversight in David to give away good Mephibosheth's land before he had heard him speak for himself, 2 Sam. xix. 29.

8. As God judgeth by law, though he be Lord-paramount of all the world, and being absolute in himself, might make his will his law, and none may say unto him, What doest thou? yet he judgeth according to the law of nature; 2. By the moral law; 3. By the gospel.[2] So rulers must rule by law, and not by lust, Deut. xvii. 11; then their words have power with them, Eccles. viii. 4; then they are the higher powers indeed, whom none may resist but at his own peril, Rom. xiii. 2; whereas a ruler and his will or lust is the higher weakness rather than the higher power. The strength of

[1] Qui statuit aliquid parte inaudita altera, æquum licet statuerit, haud æquus erit.—*Seneca in Medea.*

[2] Jubetur rex legum compendium propria manu describere, quo magis ea præcepta inhæreant animo; nam legentibus elabuntur sententiæ, quod lectio moras non patitur; qui autem scribit per otium imprimit et infigit menti singula fideliter.—*Philo de Creat. Princip.* Non aliud potest rex quam quod de jure potest.—*See Lex Rex*, p. 179–255, an excellent piece to this purpose, by Mr Rutherford. Rex est lex animata.—*Philo.*

princes lieth in the law, as Samson's strength lay in his locks, and these are the people's security. Laws are the best walls of a city;[1] without them, even walled cities want defence. They are as physic to the body, both for preventing and removing of diseases; yea, they are as the soul to the body; without them, the commonwealth would neither have beauty nor being. Where the magistrate obeys the laws, and the people obey the magistrate, there is both beauty, strength, and safety.[2] Such magistrates as practise their own laws, may the more boldly punish the transgressors of them. David, that went before his people in a holy example, threatens judgment against the workers of iniquity, Ps. ci. It was Lycurgus's honour that he never made a law which himself did not practise.[3]

9. God doth communicate his goodness to all; he causeth his sun to shine upon the just and unjust. So public persons should have public spirits; their gifts and goodness should diffuse themselves for the good of the whole. Their great care should be to promote the public interest more than their own.[4] So did Moses, Exod. xxxii. 10, 11, 32; Nehemiah, chap. v. 6–19; and David, Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6; Acts xiii. 36,[5] who served God and not himself in his generation. It was Cæsar's high commendation, that he never had himself, after the world had him for a governor; his mind was so set on the public that he forgot his own private affairs.[6] The stars have their brightness, not for themselves, but for the use of others. It is for tyrants to seek themselves; it becomes good governors to seek the good of their people.[7] It is, therefore, made one special qualification and property of a magistrate, that he be not covetous nor self-seeking, Exod. xviii. 22,[8] he must not only be

[1] *Vide* Plura apud Gerhard. de Magistrat., p. 325, &c., tom. vi.

[2] Justum est principem legibus obtemperare suis; tunc enim jura ab omnibus custodienda existimet, quando et ipse illis reverentiam præbet.—*Isidor.*

[3] Lycurgus nihil lege ulla sanxit in alios, cujus non ipse primus in se documenta daret.—*Justin. Hist.*, lib. iii. sec. 2.

[4] *Vide* Mr. Ant. Burges' Ser. on Num. xi., xii., p. 34, preached 1645.

[5] See Mr Jacomb's Ser. on Acts xiii. 36.

[6] Ipse se non habuit, postquam mundus eum principem habere cæpit. Non præes ut de subditis crescas, sed ut ipsi de te.—*Bern.*

[7] Tyrannus suum spectat commodum, rex vero subditorum.—*Arist. Polit.*, lib. viii. cap. 10, and *Philo.* lib. ii. *Allegor.* pp. 108, 109.

Tu civem patremque geras, tu consule cunctis.
Non tibi; nec tua te movean, sed publica damna.—*Claudian.*

Vide Plura in Polyanthea, de liberalitate, p. 1567.

[8] See that text fully opened in my Comment on 2 Tim. iii. 2, pp. 26, 27; and Gerhard. de Magistr., p. 270; and Mr. Rob. Bolton's Assize Ser., p. 59, &c. Nihil est tam angusti animi, tamque parvi quam amare divitias.—*Cicero*, lib. i. *Offic.*

an able, wise, religious, just man, but he must be one especially that hates covetousness, that bitter root of bribery, partiality, simony, perjury, sacrilege and pusillanimity. A magistrate should be a magnanimous, valiant man; but this sin dispirits a man, and makes him cold and cowardly in the cause of God.

Now all those governors that are thus qualified, and do resemble God in the particulars mentioned, shall have God's protection, the blessing of their people, the comfort of a good conscience when they come to die—as Moses, Samuel, Hezekiah, Nehemiah—and at the day of judgment, when the wicked shall cry to be hid, they shall appear with comfort and confidence before Christ's tribunal.

See nine properties of a good magistrate in Mr Frost's Ser., folio, pp. 288, 289; Dr Hall's Solomon's Politics, vol. i., folio, p. 209; see eight qualifications in Mr Gurnal's Ser. on Isa. iii. 26, p. 29, &c.; Mr Livesy's Jehoshaphat's Charge, p. 135, &c.; Mr Baxter's Sheet of Directions to Justices of the Peace.

Young gentlemen that are towards the law, may do well, in their minority, thoroughly to peruse Plutarch's Lives, and especially his Morals, Seneca, Xenophon's Cyropædia, and Mr Peacham's Complete Gentleman; they are full of excellent notions, both for speculation and practice, and are all translated into English for common use.

Quest. Will not this discourage inferior people, when they hear great ones called gods, and see them exalted, when they are made to serve in inferior callings?

Ans. Not at all; for there is much of God may be seen even in their callings. The husbandman's calling is looked upon as a mean employment, yet the Lord tells us that it is he who teacheth him to plough, sow, and harrow, Isa. xxviii. 24–26. As he teacheth the warrior to fight, Ps. xviii. 34, and the ruler how to sway the sceptre, and Bezaleel his curious works, Exod. xxxv. 22, so he giveth wisdom to the husbandman how to order his affairs with discretion. It is reported of Heraclitus, that when his scholars had found him in a tradesman's shop, whither they were ashamed to enter, he encouraged them, saying, *Quod neque tali loco dii desunt immortales;* That the gods were as well present in such places as in others; intimating that a divine power and wisdom might be discerned even in those common arts which are so much despised. Hence Tarentinus persuaded his friends to go with him to a forge, and he would shew them God's handiwork there, *introite, inquit, sunt hic etiam dii.* So may we say of other artificers, Come in and

see God's handiwork here.[1] There is no calling so mean but some footsteps of a deity may be seen there, and though thou be not the head—thou hast the less to account for—yet the hands, feet, and toes are useful in their places: and if thou walk humbly with thy God in them, thou mayest come to heaven before princes, who ofttimes are gods in name, but devils indeed. It is the glory of a land when ministers preach, magistrates protect, people obey, and each in their places help to preserve human society.

Obs. 8. God is not only present, but president and chief ruler amongst the rulers of the world; he is 'King of kings and Lord of lords,' 1 Tim. vi. 15; Rev. xvii. 14; his eye is with them on the throne, Job xxxvi. 7. He sits on the bench amongst them, and is in their assemblies; hence their seat is called the holy place, Eccles. viii. 10. God is Lord chief-justice on the bench with them. He doth not only look on them, but he stands in the midst of them, and erects his throne in their thrones; he eyes their affections, takes notice of their actions, attends their charges, and passeth a censure upon their censures. As he hath a more especial interest in them, so he hath a more especial eye upon them. Seneca would have men to do all *tanquam spectet Cato;* but judges should do all *tanquam spectet Deus*, remembering God's all-seeing eye is still upon them. Jehoshaphat could not ride circuit with his judges, but God doth. He is with them, not only by way of assistance and protection, but also by way of observation; he takes notice of every sentence that passeth, and will bring it again to judgment: for one special end of that great day is, *Judicare non judicata et male judicata*, To punish those sinners which have escaped unpunished here, and to rectify the unrighteous judgments of the world. This made a wicked judge on his death-bed to weep, and being asked why? To think, said he, that I who have judged others am going now to be judged myself.[2] As masters on earth must remember that they have a master in heaven, Col. iv. 1, so judges on earth must remember that they also have a judge in heaven, to whom they must shortly give an account. Let judges, then, remember that excellent counsel of Jehoshaphat to his judges, 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7, 'Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for men, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.'[3]

[1] Nihil in natura rerum tam minutum, tamque vile et abjectum, quod non aliquid admirationis hominibus adferat.—*Aristot. de Anima.*, lib. i. cap. 5.

[2] Nuper eram judex, jam judicis ante tribunal subsistens paveo, judicor ipse modo.

[3] See this text more fully opened in Sibelius, 3 Tom., Concio 10, p. 382; and Mr Blackwell's Ser. on the same text, preached 1644; and also Mr Case's, preached 1644.

1. Here is a duty enjoined, and that is circumspection and accurate walking.[1] Take heed what you do, which is again repeated; here is caution upon caution, ver. 7, to make the deeper impression in them—*q.d.*, the execution of justice is curious work, you had need, therefore, of open eyes, steady hands, and upright hearts.

Here is the means to attain this, let the fear of God be upon you, ver. 7. He that fears not God, will little regard the distresses of men, Luke xviii. 4, and will make but a sorry defender of such as do fear him; whereas he that truly fears God, dares not wrong man, Gen. xlii. 18; Neh. v. 15. Piety advanceth magistracy; it is the honour of their honours,[2] as we see in Constantine the Great,[3] and therefore it is made a chief qualification of a magistrate, that he be one that fears God, Exod. xviii. 21,[4] 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, and keeps his commandments, Joshua i. 8; Ps. ii. 10-12. The lives of rulers are the looking-glass by which inferiors dress themselves, and the rule by which they walk; they had need, therefore, to see how they walk; for such magistrates, usually such people. This fear of the Lord is the foundation of all other graces; and where this is wanting, all is wanting; all virtues without this are but empty shells, shows, shadows.

2. They must not respect persons in judgment, Prov. xviii. 5; be they old or young, rich or poor, citizens or strangers, Christians or heathens, friends or foes, he must not look at the greatness of their persons, but the goodness of their cause. As God respects not any outward things in man to move him to do so and so, so rulers must resemble him. Partiality staineth justice, and cuts in pieces the very nerves of a state.

3. Take no gifts.[5] Bribes blind the eyes of the wise, and make them to pervert judgment. Judges anciently were pictured without hands and without eyes. 1. Without hands, to note that judges must not take gifts. 2. Without eyes, because they were to administer justice according to every man's cause, without re-

[1] See ten reasons for this in Mr Livesy's Ser. on this text, p. 93. Officium geritis magni momenti; multum potestis prodesse et obesse; considerate igitur diligenter, &c.—*Lavater in locum.*

[2] *Vide* Beauty of Holiness, p. 152.

[3] *Vide* Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. v. cap. 25.

[4] *Vide* Frost's Ser. on Magistr., p. 288, folio. Decorum est ut qui dignitate, probitate emineat. Decet id quod optimum est, ab optimo coli.—*Stobæus.* Qualis rex, talis grex. Ubi Preses Philosophus (Pius) ibi felix civitas.—*Aristot., vide Plura apud Langium in Polyanth. de Magistrat.*, q. 12, p. 1670, edit. *ult.*

[5] See my Comment. on 2 Tim. iii. 2, p. 27. Judges are called gods, and God is known by giving, not by receiving.

spect to any man's relation, whether friend or foe; as Christ, so those that rule under him must not judge by outward appearance, but they must judge righteous judgment, Isa. xi. 3. There are four great perverters of judgment—viz., fear, favour, hatred, bribery;[1] this last is not the least of the four, and therefore is so frequently condemned in Scripture, Exod. xxiii. 8; Deut. xvi. 17, 19, and xxvii. 26; Job xv. 34; Prov. xv. 27, xvii. 23, xxviii. 21, and xxix. 4; Ps. xxvi. 10; Isa. v. 23; Amos v. 12; Micah iii. 10; Acts xxiv. 26. They must imitate Moses and Samuel, who cleared themselves from this sin, Num. xvi. 15; 1 Sam. xii. 3. For he that taketh a gift selleth himself, and is bound to do somewhat for the bribe he hath received. It is therefore made one note of a citizen of heaven, that he despiseth bribes, and takes no rewards to condemn the innocent, Ps. xv. 5; Isa. xxxiii. 15. There is no difference in God's dictionary between bribery and thievery, Isa. i. 23. There is little difference between *give ye*, and *deliver ye*, unless it be this, that the one goes in chains of gold, when others lie in fetters of iron. If any would see the question stated how and when a man may take a gift, let him peruse Rivet on Hosea iv. 19, p. 617, folio; Brochmand, C. Consc. vol. ii. p. 506.

4. Since we are backward to the best things, Jehoshaphat useth motives to encourage and excite judges to a careful and conscientious discharge of their duty. (1.) They judge not for man, *i.e.*, not simply in the name and authority of men, but for the Lord, who is the supreme ruler, to whom they must account; and therefore it greatly concerns them to take heed what they do. Kings' causes call for great care and consideration; he that will manage them well, must take heed what he doth.

(2.) They must consider that God is with them; which serves, first, For caution. If they do ill, he is with them to punish them; for though they be mighty, yet God is almighty, and there is a greater than they, Job xxxiii. 12, who stands in their assemblies, not as a bare spectator, but as a witness, judge, and avenger of such as act unrighteously, Job xii. 18–21. Secondly, It serves for comfort; he is with them to defend them if they do well. The devil throws his darts principally at them. They destroy his kingdom, and therefore he useth all means to destroy them; he saith to his agents, as Aram the king of Syria said to his followers, 1 Kings xxii. 31, 'Fight neither with small nor great, but against the king of Israel;' for when the commander is conquered, the soldiers fly.

[1] Quatuor ista, timor, odium, dilectio, census,
Sæpe solent hominum rectos pervertere sensus.

(3.) 'There is no iniquity in the Lord;' there is no injustice in him, and therefore let there be none in you. But of this see more ver. 2, 3, of this psalm.

How great then is the sin of those who are not afraid, in the very eye of the all-seeing God, to favour wickedness and act unrighteously. It is true they will formally and in words confess that they reign *Dei gratia et providentia Dei;* yet they are so blinded with their pomp, and infatuated with their greatness, that God is not in all their thoughts, nor must he, his laws, or people have any room amongst them. These the psalmist tacitly reproves, by telling them that God stands in their assemblies, and takes notice of all their ways.[1]

Obs. 9. The judgment of judges is the Lord's judgment, Deut. i. 17; 2 Chron. xix. 6; they have their power from him, John xix. 11; and therefore such as stand before judges are said to stand before the Lord, because the judgment is his, Deut. xix. 17; yea, though they be wicked men, yet he judgeth amongst them; though not always by consenting and approving of what they do, for they oft err and do unjustly, yet always by observing and overruling their counsels to his own praise;[2] and though they have self ends and plots, yet God hath a plot above their plots, which they effect when they mind nothing less, as we see in Pilate, Judas, Satan, in putting Christ to death, Acts ii. 23, and iv. 28.

Be patient, therefore, and silent under the unrighteous censures and judgments of men; for God can and will turn them to his people's good, as we see in Joseph's selling and imprisonment, in the three young men that were cast into the fiery furnace, and Daniel into the lion's den, yet all advanced to honour by their sufferings.

Obs. 10. Going to law, when just occasion requires, is lawful. To what end hath God ordained judges, Deut. xvi. 18, and commanded men to bring their causes and controversies before them, Deut. xix. 17, and xxv. 1, if they might not hear them? Would God, think we, stand in their assemblies, and judge amongst them, if such judgments were unlawful? or would Christ have approved, or not rather reproved men, for going before the magistrate? Luke xii. 58, and xviii. 3.

It is true indeed, 1. A man should not go to law for every trifle;

[1] See four good lessons from God's all-seeing eye in my Commentary on 2 Tim. iv. 1, obs. 3, p. 306.

[2] Judicium est ipsius Dei originaliter, authoritative et principaliter; at magistratus ministerialiter et instrumentaliter. Judicium Dei est; proinde judex in tribus Deo debet conformari; in potestate, bonitate, et veritate.

for every vain, hasty word, or petty trespass, to disquiet a man's self, and molest his neighbour, argues a turbulent, unmortified spirit. It is the glory of a man to pass by such petty offences. Men should not for a sixpenny damage spend six pound; it is a shame that our law is not rectified in this particular.

2. He must not go to law in malice, or with a revengeful mind to destroy his neighbour, but he must do all in a spirit of love and meekness, defending himself from wrong by law, and seeking peace, truth, and righteousness.[1]

3. A man must make law, as men do war, their last refuge. He must use all wise means to prevent it, by offering peace and reconciliation, referring it, and putting it off as long as may be; and when nothing will do, we may safely fly to the law.[2]

The Anabaptists hold it unlawful, whatever the injury or abuse be, to go to law, or seek to the magistrate for aid. But their folly will easily appear if we consider, 1. That God hath ordained magistracy for this very end, to succour us in our distress; 2. We have examples of those who have pleaded their cause, and that before heathen judges, as Christ before Pilate, John xviii. 23; and Paul, when he was in danger, did plead the law, and appeal to Cæsar, Acts xxiii. 3, and xxv. 10, 12.

Obj. Mat. v. 39, 40, Christ forbids us any resisting of evil, &c.

Ans. Christ speaks there against private and inordinate revenge, proceeding from wrath and passion, and not against lawful ordinate public defence before a magistrate.[3]

2. The words are not positive, but comparative—*q.d.*, rather than thou shouldst be provoked to reward evil for evil, suffer a double injury; and if by thy bearing and forbearing, peace may be preserved, the gospel honoured, thy profession adorned, and thy brother bettered, then thou must suffer two injuries rather than revenge one.

Obj. 2. 1 Cor. vi. 1-8. Here, say the Anabaptists, the apostle speaks against men's going to law.

Ans. There is no such thing in the text, as will easily appear to such as read it at large.

1. The apostle doth not simply condemn men's going to law, but he condemns their bitterness and cruelty in lawing, not bearing one with another, but vexing one another for trifles, when Chris-

[1] Sic certent causæ, ut non certent pectora.

[2] Sapientem omnia prius experiri, quam armis decet.—*Terent.*

[3] See this text more fully vindicated from all Socinian cavils, by Gerhard de Magistrat., p. 360.

tians should be patient, ready to forgive injuries, according to that of our Saviour, 'Forgive, and it shall be forgiven you,'[1] Luke vi. 37.

2. He blames them, for that they being Christians yet went to law before heathenish judges, to the reproach of Christianity; for they, being Christians, should have had Christians to have heard and ended their controversies. So that he doth not condemn their going to law, but tells them how they should do it.

See what Anabaptistic logic here is. Because Christ forbids lawing before heathens, therefore we may not go to law before Christians. The argument is cogent thus: The apostle condemns Christians for going to law before heathen judges, therefore he allows of it before Christian judges.

3. If the apostle should absolutely condemn all suing to the magistrate in case of wrong, then he should contradict his own practice; for he being in distress, did more than once appeal to Cæsar.

See this case fully cleared by Mr John Downam on the Sacrament, chap. xii.; Perkins' Cases of Conscience, lib. iii. cap. 3, q. 1, p. 118, folio; and Treatise of Christian Equity, pp. 446, 447, vol. ii.; and Zepper. de Legibus Mosaic., lib. v. cap. 6, p. 693.

Ver. 2. *How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.*

These words are a prosopopœical speech, where the Lord is brought in reasoning, reproving, and expostulating the case with the unrighteous judges of those times. Such is the pride of great ones, that they cannot bear a reproof from men; and therefore the prophet, to procure the more authority to what should be spoken, brings in God himself reproving them:[2] hence some interpreters conceive that for explanation sake the word *saying* may fitly be added to the end of this first verse: 'God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth amongst the gods, saying, How long will ye judge unjustly?' *q. d.*, Since I am present and president amongst you, how long will ye favour the wicked, and plead their cause against the innocent?

In this verse we have, 1. The sin reproved in general, and that

[1] Est fallacia a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter: nam simpliciter non reprehendit judicia, sed temeritatem in litigando, quod nihil privatim transigere voluerunt, sed in re sæpe levicula alter alterum ad tribunal ethnici judicis protrahebat, non sine injuria et contemptu Christianitatis.—*Baldwin in locum.*

[2] Ut majorem efficaciam habeat objurgatio, inducitur Deus summus judex increpans judices minores.—*Bellarm.*

is unjust judgment—a sin most proper and peculiar to judges. To be covetous, envious, passionate, and proud, is evil; but to judge unjustly, to justify the wicked, and condemn the just, is not only abominable, but an abomination in the abstract,[1] Prov. xvii. 15. This is iniquity and perverseness with a witness.[2]

2. Here is the duration of their sin, implied in the word *usque quo*,[3] how long? It implies that they had for a long time persevered in this practice, and therefore he doth not simply say, ye do unjustly, but how long will ye do unjustly? How long will ye favour the wicked in his wickedness, and condemn the just? The interrogation is a vehement negation,[4] *q.d.*, ye ought in no wise to continue so long in your injustice as you have done.

3. Here is the generality of the sinners implied in the word, ye; how long will ye, *i.e.*, all of ye, judge unjustly? There might be some few, some gleanings, as the prophet speaks, Micah vii. 1, 2, of just judges, but the generality was very corrupt.

4. Here is an exegesis, an illustration, or, if you will, an aggravation of what went before. Ye judge unjustly. What is that? Why, ye accept the persons of the wicked—*q.d.*, ye admire their persons, ye favour their faces, ye plead their causes; but the cause of the poor and the righteous man cannot be heard.[5] In the original it is, Ye accept the face of the wicked. Now, to accept the face of a man is a Hebrew phrase, and signifies a shewing favour and respect to a man, Gen. xix. 22. The angel tells Lot that he had respected his face, *q.d.*, I have shewed favour to thee, and have given thee thy request.[6] The words seem to be an aggravation of their sin; they did not sin through weakness, but through wilfulness; not through simple ignorance, but presumptuously; they sought the faces and favour, not of poor men or of friends—that might savour of some humanity, though it may not be practised in judgment; yea, they sought the faces, not simply of sinners, but of

[1] How abstracts increase the sense, see my Schools' Guard, rule 36.

[2] *Gnavel*, the word in the text, which signifieth iniquity or perverseness, comes from *gnaval*, to deal perversely and wickedly.

[3] Usque quo judicabitis iniquitatem? Heb., *i.e.*, quamdiu perseverabitis in hoc peccato inique judicandi?—*Piscat.*

[4] See my Schools' Guard, rule 30.

[5] See this phrase more fully explained in Mr Caryll on Job xiii. 8, p. 377. Nasha, est personam respicere, honorare, admirari, et in gratiam alicujus aliquid facere.—*Leigh.*

[6] Non dicit impios suscipitis, sed facies impiorum suscipitis; ut intelligas eum non de quibusvis impiis, sed de iis loqui qui spectabiles sunt, vel propter generis prærogativam, vel propter opum splendorem.—*Musculus.*

wicked, potent, turbulent, notorious sinners.[1] To get the favour of these who could bribe them, or some way gratify them, they perverted judgment, and instead of punishing the wicked they acquitted them, and instead of defending the poor they contemned them and trampled on them.

Selah. Where we find this word (sometimes) there is in that verse some remarkable thing; as in this verse it signifies as much in English as if David had said, Oh how great and grievous an offence is it before God, for favour and affection, for gifts and greatness, to pervert justice and judgment![2] It comes from *Salal*, which signifies to raise or elevate; and so it may signify the elevation of the mind in marking, or of the voice in singing. It sometimes signifies an asseveration of a thing so to be, and an admiration at it.[3] It is used seventy-four times in Scripture.

Obs. 1. Even great men, when they go astray, must be sharply reproved. God doth not here barely say, Do not unjustly, do not respect persons, &c., but as one that is angry with them, he sharply and severely expostulates the case with them, saying, 'How long will ye judge unjustly, and respect the persons of the mighty?' And as God, so his ambassadors according to their places, must not fear the face of man; but as occasion requires, they must tell the greatest of their sins, yet with a prudential consideration of all circumstances;[4] for if we must respect elders for their age, 1 Tim. v. 1, then much more rulers who are set in public place of dignity; and therefore, as in the reproving of all men, so especially of great men, great wisdom and prudence is required; as we see in Nathan, who wisely catcheth David in a parable, 2 Sam. xii. 1, &c., and that prophet which caught Ahab in his own words, and made him pass sentence upon himself, 1 Kings xx. 39, 40. It is not for every one to say unto kings, Ye are wicked, Job xxxiv. 18. It is ministers, and such as are called to the work, that may with Elijah tell Ahab of his wickedness. It is a Samuel that must reprove a Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 19. Isaiah reproves Hezekiah, Isa. xxxix. 6; Jeremiah, king Zedekiah, Jer. xxxii. 4; and John Baptist, Herod. If great men do amiss, we must not stick to say to kings and queens, 'Humble

[1] Reshagnaim, improbi, inquieti, turbulenti.

[2] Selah hic adscriptum monet malum hoc quo nihil magis execrandum, passim et apud eos quoque qui admodum justi videntur, plane regnare.—*Ut Scultetus e Bucero.*

[3] Cantor ubi ad hanc vocem pervenerat, attollebat vocem suam; et hoc signum erat gravem ibi sententiam contineri, in quam animus intendendus erat; redditur a doctis per plane, summe, vehementer.—*Ravanellus.* See more in such as comment on Ps. iii. 2; and Rivet. in Ps. xxiv. 6, p. 170, folio.

[4] See Mr Reyner's Government of the Tongue, p. 178.

yourselves,' Jer. xiii. 19. We are set to watch not only for poor men's souls, but also for the souls of rulers; yea, rather for them than for others, because by their example they do much hurt or good. Many think it no sin to do what they see great ones do. As like priest, like people, Jer. l. 6; Hosea iv. 9; so usually like magistrate, like people; if they be good, the people will be the better, Judges ii. 7; Joshua xxiv. 24. David's bounty in building the temple encouraged the people to follow him,[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 6, 7. If the king of Nineveh humble himself, so will the people, Jonah iii. 6. Rulers are like looking-glasses, by which most men dress themselves. If they be bad, like great cedars when they fall, they bring many branches down with them, and crush the shrubs that are under them. If Jeroboam sin, he will quickly draw all Israel to sin with him, 1 Kings xiv. 16; if a ruler hearken to lies, his servants will be like him,[2] Prov. xxix. 12. This made the pharisees to reject Christ, because none of the rulers believed in him, John vii. 48, which made Luther to say, *Principum delicta sunt plane diabolica:* great men's sins are the greatest sins, because they sin against great means of grace, and by their example do much mischief. When the head is unsound, the body must needs miscarry:[3] no error so dangerous as that which proceeds from the ruler, Eccles. x. 5. Jerusalem was full of abominations; what is the cause? Why, the prophets were profane, and the princes were as roaring lions, and the judges wolves, Zeph. iii. 3. Subjects study the lives of their princes more than their laws; they should therefore be great reformers, as Asa, Josiah, and Hezekiah were, who drew the people with them, 2 Chron. xv. and xxxi. 1, &c. Greatness, accompanied with goodness, is like a ring with a rich diamond, which enhanceth the price. Now the prophets, seeing that the public enormities of rulers have such an influence on people, have inveighed sharply against their sins, Isa. i. 23, and x. 1–3; Hosea v. 1; Micah iii. 1, 2; and the command is general, without any limitation to high or low, 1 Tim. v. 20, 'Such as sin before all, rebuke before all, that others may fear.' Indeed, if their sins be private and mere infirmities, we must with the mantle of love cover them, lest we exasperate instead of healing them.

Obj. Such plain preachers are counted the troublers of Israel, Jer. xxxvii. 13, 15; Amos vii. 12.

Ans. It is true they have been so accounted; but it hath been

[1] Great men should be good men.—*Vide Burroughs' Gracious Spirit*, p. 204.

[2] Mobile mutatur semper cum principe vulgus.—*Claudian.*

[3] A capite primum computrescunt pisces.—*Prov.*

by wicked men, who have themselves been the troublers of Israel, as Elijah told Ahab, 1 Kings xviii. 18.

2. If great men would but hearken to the pious counsel of God's faithful messengers, it would prevent seditions, tumults, and troublers in their territories.

Obs. 2. That continuance in evil is a great evil. How long, saith God, will ye judge unjustly? And when will you make an end of your unrighteous practices? To do an unjust act is ill, but to persevere for many years in acting unrighteousness is the height of evil. As perseverance in goodness is the crown of goodness, Job ii. 3, so perseverance in sin is sin in grain; it is of a deep dye, it is hardly if ever set out again.[1]

Obs. 3. It is no wonder to see judges judge unjustly. They did so here, and God complains of such elsewhere, Isa. i. 23; Jer. v. 1; Micah iii. 9; there are some such now, and there will be such to the end of the world, even till he who is Judge of judges shall come to judgment, and shall abolish all rule and dominion. Wicked men in all ages have the same corrupt natures and principles within them, and when temptations come they discover themselves. Besides, the world ever did, and ever will, love her own; wicked magistrates will favour wicked men; yea, if there were no bribery nor flattery in the world, yet wicked great ones would favour such as are like themselves.

Obs. 4. Few great men are good men. Some there are, but they are thin sown. Not many wise men, not many mighty, not many noble, *i.e.*, some few are called, 1 Cor. i. 26.[2] They are subject to great temptations, and so to great corruptions. Such rank ground is fertile in weeds; hence wicked men are put in the text for rich men: 'How long will ye accept the persons of the wicked?' That is, the persons of rich and potent men; that is the meaning, for judges would never accept the persons of the wicked men if they were poor and equal in respect of outward things. This the opposition implies, defend the poor and fatherless, implying that the rich were defended by them, but the poor had no helper.

Obs. 5. That perverting of judgment is a great sin. It is a crying sin; it cries for vengeance on such as practise it. This was one of those sins which caused the day of Jerusalem's misery to draw nearer, Ezek. xxii. 6, 7, and for which the Lord threatens to visit, Isa. v. 6, 7; Jer. v. 28, 29; Amos ii. 6, and v. 6, 7, 11; Mal. iii. 5. If he be cursed that shall remove the landmark, what shall be

[1] Humanum est errare, at diabolicum perseverare in errore.—*Gerson.*

[2] See Mr Robert Bolton on that text, and Mr Francis Taylor.

done to him who takes away house, land, and all? Deut. xxvii. 17. Solomon tells us, 'He that justifieth the wicked, him shall the people curse,' Prov. xxiv. 24; for judges to turn aside in judgment to the right hand or the left, is to abuse their deputation, and as much as in them lies to ungod themselves and God too. An unjust judge, as one well observes, is a cold fire, a dark sun, a dry sea, a *mare mortuum*, an ungood god, *contradictio* in *adjecto*, monsters, not men, much less gods.[1] A false teacher that poisons souls, and a corrupt judge that perverts justice, are two pestilent evils; the one destroys the fountain of piety, and the other the fountain of righteousness. If a man be oppressed, he flies to the law for refuge; but if the law be wrested and abused, where shall we find a remedy?[2] It is sad with the flock when the shepherd is a wolf. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

Obs. 6. Magistrates must judge impartially. They must not respect persons but causes. They must look more on the face of the cause, than the face of the man. This respecting of persons is not good, saith Solomon, that is, it is very bad,[3] Prov. xxiv. 23. It is a sin oft forbidden, Deut. i. 17, and xvi. 19; Job xiii. 8, 10; 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7; Prov. xviii. 5, and xxviii. 21; James ii. 9; Jude 16. Men must not judge according to any outward appearance or quality of the person that appears before them, but according to the equity of the cause, John vii. 24. As God respects not persons, Deut. x. 17; Job xxxiv. 19; Acts x. 34; Gal. ii. 6; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25; 1 Pet. i. 17; so judges, who are earthly gods, must imitate their Lord and Master, whose person they represent, in whose seat they sit, and by whose command they act. So that if they will do anything in favour of the mighty, let them do it in favour of the mighty God; and this they do, when they execute justice and judgment in the gate. As they must not respect the rich for his riches, so neither the poor for his poverty,[4] so as in pity to him to wrong the rich, nor out of fear or honour to the rich comply with them to oppress the poor, Exod. xxiii. 3; Lev. xix. 15. In charity we must have respect to a poor man's necessity; but in point of justice neither the power of the rich, nor the penury of the poor, but right only must be regarded, Ps. lxxii. 7. If a man might strain

[1] Quænam potest perniciosior esse perversitas quam si apud medicum invenias mortem, apud doctorem mendacium, apud judicem injustitiam?—*Musculus.*

[2] *Vide* Comforts Against Oppression, Mr Ash's Sermon on Ps. ix. 9, preached 1642, and Mr Caryll, Sermon on Ps. cxix. 134, preached 1651.

[3] Meiosis. *Vide* Schools' Guard on that figure.

[4] Pressa est paupertas, opulentia splendida regnat;
Dives ubique valet, pauper ubique jacet.

the law for any, it is for the poor; and yet the Lord himself, who is most tender over the poor, will not have their persons, but their causes looked upon. A respecter of person is a kind of idolater;[1] the respect which he owes to God and right, he gives to riches. Petty thieves shall wear chains of iron, when grand robbers and murderers sit on the bench with chains of gold. As God knows no honour, royalty, or greatness in the matter of sin, so neither must his deputies. I see no reason, said the woman, why I should be punished for breaking one commandment, when King Richard breaks all ten, and yet goes unpunished. The judges in Egypt were painted without hands, and blind, and the Areopagites, who were judges in Athens, passed their sentence in the night, and had their judicatories in dark rooms, that they might not be biassed by prejudice or affection to pass wrong judgment upon the person. Out of judgment to shew favour to our friends is not unlawful; but in point of judgment they must be blind, not knowing friend or foe, but look soberly on the cause which is before them. When public right is in question, the poor person must be laid aside, and we must eye his cause; for though it be seldom seen that a poor man is preferred before a rich man in his cause, yet sometimes it may so fall out that at the tears and cries of the poor, and to get a name for a merciful man amongst men, there may be offending on that hand. It is true we must shew mercy, but yet with judgment and discretion. In other cases we may shew respect to men for their age, gifts, graces, affinity, dignity, calling, &c., but not in judgment. The court must know no kinsmen. Judges must with David do justice to all the people, without distinction of rich or poor, 2 Sam. viii. 15; they must dispense justice with an equal hand and an even balance. As the law itself is equal to all, so should the judge, who is a living law, be the same to all that fly unto him for succour. So that this makes nothing for the sottish, uncivil Quakers, who cry down all outward respect and reverence to men in authority under pretence of respect to no man's person. Whereas the Scripture doth not condemn civil but sinful respect of persons; the servant must reverence his master, and the child his father, and the subject his sovereign.[2] Besides, there is a sacred respect of persons used both by God and man. Thus God had respect to Abel and his offering, but not to Cain. He had respect to Lot, and saved him out of Sodom, Gen. xix. 21. Thus the saints may

[1] Prosopolatria est idololatria.

[2] See more on this point in my Comment. on 2 Tim. iv. 19, p. 468.

and must love the saints with a spiritual and more intimate love, Ps. xvi. 3.

Obs. 7. Wicked men and turbulent men, they are the great *reshagnims* of the world. They disquiet and trouble themselves; like the troubled sea, they are always casting up the dirt and filth of sin, Prov. xi. 17; Isa. lvii. 20, 21. They trouble their own houses, Prov. xv. 27; yea, these Achans and Ahabs trouble all Israel; they are the pests and plagues, the ulcers and botches of the places where they live. As good men are a public good, and make the places where they live the better for them, Gen. xii. 2, so wicked men are public evils, and make the places where they dwell the worse for them. As grace meekens men and makes them quiet, Isa. xi. 6, so sin, where it reigns and is not subdued, disquiets men and makes them turbulent.

Ver. 3. *Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.*

Ver. 4. *Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.*

Having finished the reprehension, and shewed negatively what judges must not do, viz., they must not judge unjustly, nor respect persons; now we come to the direction, where the Lord teacheth them, and tells them affirmatively what they must do, viz., they must defend the poor and fatherless, and succour such as are in distress. So that having dehorted them from the vices which are more especially incident to rulers, he now exhorts them to the contrary virtues. So that here we have a clear description of the magistrate's duty, which consists principally of two parts: 1. To defend the good; 2. To punish the bad; both which are also mentioned by the apostle, Rom. xiii. 3.

This counsel of God, saith Luther, is worthy to be written in letters of gold on the walls of all judicatories. It may fitly be termed God's charge to magistrates. They give charges to men, and here God gives four things in charge to them—viz., 1. To defend; 2. To do justice; 3. To deliver; 4. To rescue.

2. The object, or the persons whom they must thus protect: 1. The poor; 2. The fatherless; 3. The afflicted; 4. The needy.

As if the Lord had said, This is your main business, and therefore let it be your great care, to defend the poor, succour the afflicted, and support the fatherless, and to help him who hath no helper. As the proper work of the physician is to cure the sick, and of a minister to comfort the weak, so of a magistrate to defend the

poor, and vindicate the oppressed from the violence of the oppressor.

Quest. Must not the magistrate defend the rich man in a righteous cause as well as the poor? Must he not execute justice for him as well as for the needy? Why then doth the Lord here only mention the poor?

Ans. It is true, magistrates must execute justice for rich men as well as for the poor; yet, since the poor are most subject to injury, therefore the magistrate must be more careful to defend them. The poor are low in condition, and are often laid lower by oppression: now, God hath raised up magistrates for this very end, to protect them in their low condition, and to lift them up when they are laid lower by oppression.

2. As for rich men, the world loves her own, especially her white sons, her great and prosperous children, so that their causes are sure to be heard, and their right improved to the utmost who have so many *angels* to appear for them.[1] Rich men have many friends, Prov. xiv. 20. Where money is stirring, let the cause be never so unjust, yet ofttimes might overcomes right, so great an influence hath riches upon the rulers of this world; so that it is needless to bid rulers plead for rich and mighty men. Besides, men are afraid of wronging great ones, because they have great power and many friends to vindicate them against the wrongs of any.

3. There is an averseness and backwardness in our natures to help the poor, who have no gifts nor friends to side with them, who have nothing to plead but only the justness of their cause. Men that are in poverty and adversity find few friends, hence it is that the poor is oft hated even of his own neighbours, Prov. xiv. 20, and xix. 7; but the lovers of the rich are many. The poor prodigal is called 'this thy son,' not this my brother, Luke xv. 30.

4. Where the hedge is low, men are apt to get over. When men are poor, then great men especially are apt to trample on them,[2] 1 Sam. xviii. 23; hence it is that God lays such special injunctions on the magistrate to see to them. The birds of prey can shift for themselves, but it is the poor dove that is made a prey. Hence the fatherless, the widow, the poor, the stranger, and the oppressed are yoked together in Scripture, because in respect of their weakness they are more liable to wrong, Deut. xiv. 29; Ps. x. 18; Mal. iii. 5; James i. 27. It is not the ass of the rich, or the ox

[1] Auro loquente quis tacebit?

[2] Dente timentur apri, defendunt cornua cervos;
Imbelles damæ, quid nisi præda sumus?—*Martial Epigr.*, lib. xiii. cap. 95.

of the mighty, but it is the ass of the fatherless, and the ox of the widow, that is taken away, Job vi. 27, and xxiv. 3.

5. The Lord speaks here to unrighteous judges, who sided with the rich and turbulent oppressors of the poor; and to make his exhortation take the deeper impression, he multiplies words, and doth, as it were, bid them defend, defend, defend. Whom? The poor, the poor, the poor. As the Lord said of Jerusalem, 'I will overturn, overturn, overturn it,' *i.e.*, I will speedily and certainly overturn it, Ezek. xxi. 27; so the doubling and trebling of the duty and persons here is very emphatical, and notes God's earnest affection and desire to have the poor and fatherless speedily and certainly defended against the oppressions of the mighty.[1]

Defend the poor, *i.e.*, defend the cause of the poor, since he cannot defend himself; or, judge for the poor and fatherless[2] (as it is in the fountain), *i.e.*, in your judgment vindicate them and their just causes from the sons of violence. They are God's clients, and therefore they should be the judge's care: for this end God hath set them in his stead, that they might defend those who cannot defend themselves, and use their power for the good of those who have no power, Job xxvi. 2. The Hebrew word *Dal*, which we render poor,[3] comes from *Dalal* to spend or consume, and is applied to the weak and sickly, whose health is spent, Gen. xli. 19, 2 Sam. xiii. 4; and to the poor, whose wealth is wasted, Ps. xli. 1, lxxii. 12, 13, and cxiii. 7; and they fallen into decay, Lev. xxv. 35. The word is opposed to rich men, who in Scripture are called great men, full and fat, Ps. lxxviii. 31, and only men of wealth, Ruth ii. 1; Jer. xlix. 32. Now, it is not these full and fat ones, who have many friends, but it is the lean and weak man, that is poor in purse, sickly in person, and many other ways brought low; it is these poor hopeless, helpless ones that rulers must have a care of. It is not only their duty, but their glory so to do, Job xxix. 11–18.

And fatherless,[4] or the orphan, that hath no father or friend to help him, but is forsaken of all. The word signifies one that hath lost his sight;[5] because he that hath lost his parents is deprived of the light of counsel and direction how to carry himself in the world. As God delights to help those who cannot help themselves, Prov. xxiii. 10, 11, so must earthly gods. The word is rendered

[1] *Vide* Schools' Guard, rule 43.

[2] *Shiptu dal;* judicate pro tenui.—*Mont.*

[3] The word poor is a comprehensive word, including in it all sorts of poor.

[4] *Fatom,* pupillus orphanus, Lam. v. 3.

Ορφανος ab ὀρφνὸς tenebrosus, quod liberi quodammodo amittunt lucem et pupillas oculorum, amissis parentibus.—*Minshew.*

by the Septuagint, poor; indeed, the poor and fatherless are oft joined in Scripture, and are synonymes, being put for one and the same person; as, Ps. x. 14, 'The poor committeth himself to thee; thou art a father to the fatherless.' He that is called poor in the beginning of the verse, is called fatherless in the end. The word is taken, sometimes properly, for one that hath lost his father. 2. Metaphorically, for such as are in deep distress and have no helper. Now, we are not to restrain the sense here only to orphans; for he that is a father may be called fatherless, and the child that hath a father yet may be called fatherless, when he extremely needs the help either of God or man, Hosea xiv. 3.

Do justice to the afflicted and the needy; or, as the original runs, justify the afflicted, *q.d.*, if his cause be just, fear not to justify him, and pronounce him judicially just and innocent. Many unjust judges will hear the causes of the poor;[1] but when they have heard them, and found them to be right, yet they do not justify them, but the wicked. The afflicted and the poor are joined in Scripture, Zeph. iii. 12, because poverty is usually accompanied with many afflictions. The word *gnani*, which we render *afflicted*, signifies also to be humble and meek,[2] Zech. ix. 9, for as riches make men cruel and proud, so affliction makes men humble and lowly.

'And needy.'[3] Properly the word signifies a poor man that hath lost his goods, and so is brought to poverty and misery, whether by oppression or otherwise. These are called the poor of this world, Jas. ii. 5, and the poor of the earth, Job xxiv. 4, Amos viii. 4.

Ver. 4. 'Deliver the poor and needy'[4] from the violence of the mighty; the same is again repeated to make the deeper impression, and to shew how earnest God is to have judges put it in execution. God drives this nail to the head with one exhortation upon the neck of another, to fasten it the better in our hearts and memories.

'Rid them out of the hand of the wicked,' *i.e.*, free and rescue him from the paws and power of turbulent men, who, like their father the devil, delight in vexing others. The words seem to be a gradation, and not a bare repetition. 1. Judges must hear the cause of the poor. 2. Having found them innocent, they must justify them and declare their innocency. 3. They must not rest there, but

[1] *Hitsdîku*, justificate, absolvite, et justum pronunciate.

[2] Humilem et pauperem justificate.—*Vulg. Lat.*

[3] *Rash, pauper*, from *rash, depauperari*, to be impoverished or made poor.

[4] *Ebion, egenus*, a poor, indigent, needy creature, from *Ahab desideravit*, because the poor that have nothing desire food, raiment, money, and such things as they want.

they must rescue and deliver them as lambs out of the paws and jaws of the lion.[1] By this variety of words and multiplication of expressions the Holy Ghost denotes unto us all kind of misery which we are exposed to in this world by reason of potent and politic enemies. Whatever the misery be, whether in body, goods, or name, (such is God's goodness,) that he would have magistrates, who are his vicegerents, to take notice of it, and deliver his people out of it.

Obs. 1. Magistrates must be a defence to the poor and fatherless, to the afflicted and the needy. They are that great tree which must shelter such as are under them from storms, Dan. iv. 20-22. They are called gods, and in this they must act like him whose name they bear. Now, (1.) Sometimes the poor lie in deep distress, and then the Lord is a refuge to them, Isa. xxv. 4. He hears their cry, Ps. xxxiv. 6, and lxix. 33, whether it be vocal or virtual; for sometimes the poor man's afflicted condition cries, though he say nothing, and God hears this cry: Ps. xii. 5, 'For the oppression of the poor will I arise.' Though the oppressed should not vocally cry, yet their very oppression virtually cries for help, James v. 4.

2. Sometimes they lie in the dust, and then he raiseth them, Ps. cxiii. 7; they lie amongst the pots, and are sullied with affliction, yet then he makes them beautiful like a dove, Ps. lxviii. 13.

3. Sometimes they are environed with mighty enemies, and then he rescues them, Job v. 15, 16, by cutting off their oppressors, and comforting the oppressed, Job xxxvi. 6, 15.

4. But specially the godly poor, God is very tender over these: he that toucheth them to hurt them, toucheth the apple of his eye. These are his jewels, his glory, his portion, his pleasant portion, his inheritance, his dove, his spouse, his anointed ones; and if kings wrong them, he will rebuke even kings, for their sakes, saying, 'Touch not mine anointed,' Ps. cv. 15; Amos ii. 6. God visits for such sins.

5. As for the fatherless, who are exposed to much sorrow—and therefore Christ promiseth his disciples that he will not leave them orphans, or fatherless, John xiv. 18—God hath styled himself a father to them, Ps. lxviii. 5; Hosea xiv. 3. 2. He hath made many laws for them, Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. xvi. 11, 14, xxiv. 17, and xxvi. 12, 13, and curseth those that wrong them,

[1] 1. Judicate. 2. Justificate. 3. Eripite. Eripere pauperem de manu potentis est sententiam adversus potentem pro paupere juste pronuntiatam executioni mandare, et reipsa efficere ut pauper nihil detrimenti a potentiore inimico patiatur.—*Bellarm.*

Deut. xxvii. 19. 3. He chargeth magistrates, in the text, to be tender over them; so Isa. i. 17; Job xxix. 12, and xxxi. 17, 18, 21. 4. When magistrates are negligent in defending them, he hears their cry, and threatens to visit for that sin, Isa. i. 23, 24; Jer. v. 28, 29, and xxi. 12; Mal. iii. 5. 5. If magistrates will not plead their cause, yet God will, Deut. x. 18; Ps. x. *ult.*, and cxlvi. 9; Prov. xxiii. 11.

6. St James sums up all religion, as it were, into this one duty. It is not enough that we hear, pray, and worship God; but we must also love our neighbours, and show pity to the poor and fatherless, without which all our profession is vain, James i. 27. Now magistrates, in their capacity and calling, must resemble God, they must be a refuge to the poor, a father to the fatherless, and a comfort to the comfortless. Job, who was an eminent magistrate in his time, how tender was he over the poor and fatherless! He was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor, and the blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon him, and he made the widow's heart to sing for joy, Job xxix. 12, &c., xxx. 15, and xxxi. 17, 21:[1] especially he must defend the godly poor, who are oft contemned by the high and haughty of the world for their poverty, and hated for their piety. These commit themselves and their cause to God, Ps. x. 14, and therefore they are called his poor, by a special propriety, Ps. lxxii. 2. 'He,' speaking of Solomon, 'shall judge thy people with equity.' God's deputies must be tender over those whom God so tenders, that he prizeth them above all the world besides.

'Do Justice.'—*Obs.* 2. As magistrates must administer justice unto all, so especially to the afflicted and distressed. These are most liable to injury; and therefore, if justice incline to any side with favour, it should be towards the poor. This is the very end why rulers are set up—viz., to execute judgment, and do justice amongst the people, Isa. lvi. 1; Hosea xii. 6; Amos v. 24; Zech. vii. 9. Therefore it is that David prayed for his son Solomon that God would give him a clear understanding and right judgment to discern between good and evil, and an upright heart to walk answerable to light received, that so he might 'judge the people with righteousness, and the poor with judgment,' Ps. lxxii. 1, 2; and Solomon himself makes the like prayer, 1 Kings iii. 9; and

[1] Men's necessities are many, but most of them spring from ignorance and want of skill, or impotency and want of power, both noted here by blindness and lameness. Job was a guide to the blind and a staff to the lame, leading the one and supporting the other.—*D. Sanderson*, 1 *Ser. ad Magistr.*, p. 162.

the queen of Sheba tells him that God had raised him for this end, 1 Kings x. 9. It was the honour of the kings of Egypt that they bound their judges by oath not to act unjustly, no, though they themselves should command them so to do. Clothing is an ornament, and a diadem is a glory: all magistrates, like Job, should 'put on righteousness as a robe, and judgment as a diadem,' Job xxix. 14: so did Christ, Isa. xi. 5.[1] This was David's honour, that he executed justice and judgment to all his people, 2 Chron. xviii. 14. This is so lovely a thing, that Absalom, when he would entice the people from David, tells them that if he were made judge in the land, though David did not, yet he would do them justice, 2 Sam. xv. 4. As injustice is all vice, so justice comprehends all virtue,[2] so excellent a thing is justice. This is our duty, Micah vi. 8; as every man in his place must do justly, so specially the magistrate.[3]

2. It is our security, Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16; it establisheth thrones, Prov. xvi. 12, and xxix. 14; Jer. xxii. 3, 4, and preserves a people from ruin, Amos v. 15. There is no one thing, religion excepted, that doth more secure and adorn a nation than justice doth.[3] It is both *columna et corona reipublicæ;* it is a prop to make it subsist firm in itself, and, as a crown, to render it glorious in the eyes of others. It is as the cement in the building, which holds all together. Take this away, and nations will quickly run to ruin, Jer. v. 1, and xxi. 12.[4] Gall is bitter, and hemlock is poisonous; now, when judgment is turned into gall, and righteousness into hemlock, judgment is not far from that people, Hosea x. 4; Amos vi. 12. The law thunders out curses against such as pervert judgment, specially the judgment of the fatherless and the widow, Deut. xxvii. 19; Prov. xxiv. 24.

3. It is our glory. Righteousness exalts a nation, Prov. xiv. 34, and brings a blessing on it. 'The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice,' Jer. xxxi. 23; so that, what Solomon saith of wisdom is most true of justice: 'Exalt her, and she shall exalt thee to honour; she shall be to thee an ornament of grace, and a crown of

[1] The first thing we do in a morning is to put on our clothes: before we eat or drink, we do this. So should every good magistrate prefer public justice before his own private affairs, much more before his jades, his kites, his curs, and pleasures.—*D. Sanderson*, 1 *Ser. ad Magistratum*, p. 155.

[2] *οὐ μέρος αρετῆς, ἀλλ' ὅλη ἀρετὴ.—Arist. Ethick*, lib. v.

[3] *Vide* Mr Ant. Burgess' Ser. on Psalm cvi. 30, p. 2, preached 1644; and Dr Sanderson's Ser. on the same text, p. 238; Mr Greenhil on Ezek. i. 14, p. 74.

[4] Eæ respublicæ ad interitum inclinant in quibus boni à malis nihil differunt.—*Antisthenes.*

glory shall she deliver to thee,' Prov. iv. 8, 9. Justice and judgment is more acceptable to God than sacrifice,[1] Prov. xxi. 3; without it, all duties are an abomination, Isa. i. 15; Amos v. 21, 24, and our prayers in vain, Josh. vii. 20.

A heathen could say, that the choicest gift that ever God gave to man, considering what miseries he is subject to, was government by justice, which bridleth and restraineth the presumption of the furious, preserveth the innocent in his honesty, and yieldeth equally to every man his due.[2]

Now that justice may be rightly dispensed to all, seven rules must be observed:

Do justice, 1. Discreetly; 2. Speedily; 3. Impartially and universally; 4. Resolutely and courageously; 5. Righteously and exactly; 6. Soberly; 7. Diligently.

1. A good magistrate will execute justice discreetly: he is not rash nor heady; but he ponders all circumstances of person, time, and place, and judgeth accordingly. Now, as a word spoken in season—or as it is in the fountain—a word set upon its wheels,[3] having a due concurrence of all circumstances—is like apples of gold in pictures of silver, not only delightful to the eye, but profitable to the possessor, Prov. xxv. 11; so an act of justice rightly circumstantiated, is both pleasant and profitable. He must not regard bare accusations; for who then should be innocent?[4] Christ himself was accused for a blasphemer and an enemy to Cæsar, and the apostles were called deceivers, and yet they were true men, 2 Cor. vi. 8. Besides, wicked men are very subtle in concealing, forging, and wrapping up their sinful practices, Micah vii. 3; but a prudent magistrate will sift and search out the truth of a matter, Deut. xvii. 4; Job xxix. 16. For want of this, wise David was overseen, and gave away good Mephibosheth's estate unheard, upon the bare accusation of a self-seeking Ziba, 2 Sam. xix. 29; and it was hard to censure Queen Vashti before she was heard speak for herself, Esth. i. 19. It was good counsel, and he did practise it himself, which Alexander gave to his judges, that when they had heard one party speak, they should stop one ear to hear what the

[1] Pinguior victima mactari Deo non potest quam homo sceleratus. See six motives to quicken magistrates to do justice, in Mr Taffyn on Amendment, pp. 122, 354, and ten more in Mr Levisy's Jehoshophat's Charge, p. 75, 80, &c.; Clerk's Mirror, chap. 74, 75.

[2] Plato de Repub., lib. iv.

[3] *Beophnau*, super rotis suis.

[4] In capital causes especially deliberation must be used.—*Goodwin's Jewish Antiq.*, lib. v. cap. 6, p. 195.

other party could say for himself. It is folly to speak before we know the depth of the matter before us, Prov. xviii. 13. God will have both parties heard, Exod. xxii. 9.[1]

2. Speedily. He must expedite causes, and not make a long harvest of a little crop. Delay oft makes the remedy worse than the disease. To tire out the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, with tedious suits and dilatory courses till they have no means left to prosecute their righteous cause, is an act of great unrighteousness. Christ is described (and a magistrate cannot follow a better copy) to be one that seeketh judgment and executeth justice speedily, Isa. xvi. 5. So did David, Ps. ci. 8. As it is ill to do right rashly, so it is wrong to do it delayingly; and as they do a double courtesy who do it speedily, so they do double right who do it, though discreetly and deliberately, yet quickly. When the poor woman petitioned Philip king of Macedon to hear her cause, he answered that he was not at leisure. Then, said she, be not king. The king, laying to heart her speech, gave speedy audience, not only to her, but to all men from that day forward. And the emperor Trajan on horseback, ready to go to battle, alighted to hear the complaint of a poor woman.

3. Impartially and universally to all, without fear of foes or favour to friends. As God's justice knows no relations,[2] Isa. xxvii. 11; Jer. xxii. 4, 24, so magistrates in point of justice must know none. Levi, in this case, did know neither father nor mother, brethren nor children, Deut. xxxiii. 9. David punished his Absalom with a three years' banishment for his fratricide, 1 Kings xiii. 38. King Asa deposed his own mother for her idolatry, 1 Kings xv. 13. And that resolution of Saul was heroic, if it had been well grounded: 'Though the fault be found in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die,' 1 Sam. xiv. 39. It is excellent, but hard, to censure those we love. It is the cause's equity, and not the person's intimacy, that must sway us. If the person be wicked, though he be never so nearly related to thee, punish him; as that noble Roman did his son for siding with Cataline, *Te patriæ genui, non Catalinæ.* And as that man who pleaded kindred, My lord, I am your kinsman, said the prisoner. Are you so? said the judge; why then you shall have a higher gibbet erected,[3] that all the world may see that I will do justice to a kinsman. When Zaleucus had made a law against adulterers, that whosoever should be found guilty thereof, *Exocula-*

[1] See more directions in Mr Lawson's Body of Divinity, on the Ninth Commandment, p. 221, &c.

[2] Exuit personam judicis, quisquis amici induit.—*Cicero.*

[3] Altiorem erigite crucem.

retur, he should have his eyes put out. It so fell out, that his son was the first offender; whereupon sentence was pronounced, and execution ready to be done. The people entreating the judge his father to pardon the fault, upon deliberation he put out one of his own eyes and one of his son's, and so shewed himself *pium patrem, et justum judicem,* a good father, and a just judge. As Aristotle said sometimes, *Amicus Socrates,* &c., Socrates I love, and Plato I love, but I love the truth above them all; so say you, My friends I love, my kindred I love, my children I love, but justice and judgment I love above them all. Justice is pictured blind, with a sword in one hand and a balance in the other.[1] It cannot see a rich man from a poor, nor a friend from a foe. It makes not the law like a spider's web, which catcheth little flies whilst the great ones break through. It knows that one sinner, one Achan, one Saul, one Ahab, unpunished destroys much good, Eccles. ix. 18.

4. Resolutely and courageously. Judges must not fear the faces or the frowns of any; for the judgment is the Lord's which they execute, who will defend them in it,[2] Exod. xviii. 21; Deut. i. 17. Nehemiah (chap. vi. 11) will not fear nor fly, but stands it out against all the plots and power of Sanballat and his confederates. God's Joshuas and Zerubbabels must be strong and of good courage,[3] Josh. i. 9; Hag. ii. 4. Hence Constantine is styled a man-child for his courage in venturing for the Church's weal. The Lord himself is a shield and sanctuary to the shields of the earth; he is on their side, and therefore they should not fear what man can do unto them, Ps. lvi. 5, and cxviii. 6. Inferior creatures, when backed by a superior, are full of spirit. A little dog will venture on a creature far stronger than himself, when his master stands by to back him. Do justice faithfully, and then let the world fall on thee, it shall never hurt thee.[4] If any dare to do injustice, do not thou fear to do justice on him. Solomon's throne was upheld by lions, not by fearful harts and hares,[5] 2 Kings x. 20; 2 Chron. ix. 18, 19, intimating that magistrates should be such for magnanimity and courage. The pillars of a house had need to be heart of oak. Magistrates are the pillars of a land, and therefore had need to be solid, seasoned, resolute, undaunted men, that will not warp for fear or

[1] *Vide* Plutarch de Iside.

[2] Magistrates must be *anschei chajil, viri virtutis,* valiant men.

[3] Judex neminem timeat nisi seipsum. See many reasons why magistrates should be courageous, in Dr Sanderson's 1 Ser. ad Magistratum, p. 176, &c.

[4] Fiat justitia, et ruat mundus.

[5] See how magistrates must be like lions in seven particulars, in M. John Carter's Ser. at Norwich on Rev. v. 5, p. 120, styled the Lion.

favour, for threats or gifts. These shields of the earth must look for darts sometimes from superiors, anon from inferiors, and, if they be not well steeled, to flatter the one or please the other, they will fail in duty. None but noble raised spirits can hold out in doing well, though they hear ill for their pains.[1] There are three dogs which Luther would not have ministers to bring into the pulpit with them,—viz., Envy; Pride; Covetousness. And there are three sins which no magistrate should bring to the seat of justice with him,—viz., Pusillanimity; Malice and anger; Covetousness.

(1.) A pusillanimous man dares not say nay to an unrighteous motion, for fear of the displeasure of the people, or of some great man. It was their sin that condemned Naboth for fear of displeasing Jezebel; and Pilate for fear of Cæsar condemned Christ, though he found him innocent, and knew that he was delivered to him of envy.[2] Paul's cause was good, yet Felix will not free him because of the people. Darius, to please his princes, sends Daniel to the lions' den, though with some regret. So king Zedekiah, overawed by his princes, delivers Jeremiah into their hands, Jer. xxxviii. 5. Inordinate fears are very prejudicial to men in public places. Such fear slays a man whilst he lives, and buries him before he is dead, Isa. xxii. 2. It enfeebles and dispirits a man, so that he cannot act so freely as becomes him. The fear of man is a snare, Prov. xxix. 25; and every coward, saith Aristotle, is a murderer.[3] As all Christians, so magistrates, then, especially had need to be men of good courage; and the rather because they must oppose the torrent and current of the sins of the times they live in.[4]

(2.) Malice and anger become not a judge. Spite will never do right. Malice puts men upon revenge. Micaiah must to prison though he prophesy nothing but truth. And why so? For I hate him, said Ahab.[5] Aristides, though a heathen, said well. When sitting as judge between two persons, the one charged his adversary with great wrongs done to Aristides. He answered, Friend, tell me only what he hath done to thee, for I sit here to do right to thee, and not to myself.

(3.) Covetousness. A magistrate must not only be free from it,

[1] Bene facere, et male audire, regium est.—*Seneca.*

[2] It is a good clause which I have read in Minshew, that in the oaths of the king's justices they shall swear to do right, notwithstanding the king's letters.—An. 18, Edw. 3, 4.

[3] *πᾶντα δειλὸν φονικὸν.—Aristot.*

[4] See Mr Ash's Ser. on Ps. xxxi. 24, preached 1642.

[5] Affectus ubi judicat, ibi ratio claudicat; et ubi est fervida vindicta, ibi non temperata justitia.

but he must hate it, Exod. xviii. 21; a man that is greedy of gain, will transgress for a morsel of bread, Prov. xxviii. 21; a poor reward will put him out of his way. This sin is the root of all evil, bribery, simony, sacrilege, partiality, tyranny, time-serving, and turning of judgment backward, Isa. lix. 14; these are some of those fruits of this bitter root. Such will sell their wit, parts, power, conscience, religion, and all for money. I have read of many sales, as sale-winds, by witches,[1] sale-churches, by patrons, or rather latrons, sale-hands, by mercenary soldiers; but sale-justice and a sale-sentence is one of the worst sales, for it makes the just man a sinner, and takes away the righteousness of the righteous from him. This Solomon looked upon as a great evil:[2] Eccles. iii. 16, 'He saw the place of judgment, and lo, wickedness was there.' To find wickedness in taverns, theatres, or mountains of prey, is no wonder; but for seats of justice to be full of injustice, this is gall and hemlock indeed, Amos vi. 12. These love *dialectum Doricam*,[3] the Dorick dialect, as one phraseth it, they are all for gifts, like those in Hosea's time, Hosea iv. 18; her rulers with shame love Give ye, *i.e.*, in a shameful, sordid manner they call for gifts and presents, crying, Give, give; bring, bring; like the insatiable horse-leech, they cry, *Hab, hab*, give, give, Prov. xxx. 15; but will you see the end of such bribers? why, 'fire shall consume their tabernacles,'[4] Job xv. 34.

5. Righteously and exactly. A magistrate must not only be *justus*, but he must do *justa*, yea, and he must do them *juste*. He must hear both parties speak, and then judge righteously between them. They must not wrest nor rack the law, to make it speak what it never meant, but with just judgment must they judge the people, Lev. xix. 15; Zech. viii. 16. He must dispense justice carefully, constantly, and conscientiously. Justice justice he must do, *i.e.*, pure justice,[5] Deut. xvi. 20, not seeming, but real justice; not justice in part, but entire justice in measure and degree, without passion, corruption, or delay. He must not do an act or two of justice, but it must be his constant work; it is his clothing

[1] *Vide* Heyling's Geogra. in Lapland.

[2] Non in homines debent imperium habere, sed in belluas, qui publicorum officiorum functionibus, non quid ex usu sit publico, sed quid rei privatæ serviat, quærunt.—*Luther.*

[3] They love δῶρα, *dona.*

[4] Siquis honorem verum amet, ab omni suspicione captandorum munerum sedulo cavebit, præsertim in eo constitutus loco, in quo maxime cavendum ne iniquitas venalis fiat.—*Rivet.*

[5] Justitiam justitiam, *i.e.*, justissimam et puram justitiam.—*Piscator.* See Schools Guard, rule 43.

which he must put on every day.[1] His head, and heart, and hands must be covered with it, Job xxviii. 14. Rulers must not free ravens and censure doves, nor loose Barabbas and bind Christ. This is not execution of justice, but persecution of the just. They must proportion the punishment according to the offence, and not barely shave the head, which for its enormities ought to be cut off.[2] There must be an accurate, arithmetical, and geometrical proportion observed, *i.e.*, the fact with all its circumstances must be considered, and there must be a retaliation rendered accordingly. Great sins must have great punishment, and lesser sins lesser punishment. Life must for life, and eye for eye, Gen. ix. 6; Exod. xxi. 24.

6. Soberly. He must be a temperate man, else how will he govern others, that cannot govern himself, or reform others, who is unreformed himself? What the apostle saith of ministers is true of magistrates; if a man cannot rule himself and his own house, how shall he govern the house of God? 1 Tim. iii. 5. He is not like to help another, who hath lost himself. Wine and strong drink make men forget the law, and pervert judgment. It is not for princes to be eating in the morning when they should be judging the people,[3] Eccles. x. 16, 17; Jer. xxi. 12. Judges must be wise and prudent; but when temperance is gone, where is the prudence? He that is luxurious and riotous, is not wise, saith the wisest of men, Prov. xx. 1; and therefore Solon made a law, that whatever ruler was found drunk should be put to death.

7. Diligently. It is God's work, and he is cursed that doth it negligently. Justice must diffuse itself; it must run down as a mighty stream, fully, freely, commonly, and universally,[4] Amos v. 24. Rivers run by the poor man's door as well as the rich. It must be their delight to do judgment, Prov. xxi. 15. Rulers were not made for pleasure, but for labour. They were not born for themselves, but for the people's good; hence those titles of nursing fathers, shepherds, stewards, &c., all which imply a great deal of care and pains.

[1] Judex nihil aliud est quam, δίκαιον ἔμψυχον, *i.e.*, jus quoddam animatum.—*Arist.*

[2] Distinguendum est inter pœnam scelerum jure divino definitam, et arbitrio magistratus relictam. Quoad illam servanda est æqualitas arithmetica, quoad hanc geometrica.—*Gerhard.*

[3] In sicco habitat sapientia, non in humido; fundamentum ejus est temperantia.—*Socrates.*

[4] Sudandum est iis qui magistratum gerunt; adeundæ inimicitiæ, subeundæ sæpe pro republica tempestates, cum multis audacibus, improbis, nonnunquam etiam potentibus dimicandum est.—*Cicero pro Sestert.*

Obs. 3. Good duties need much pressing. Such is the dulness and indisposition of our natures to the best things, that without much pressing they take little or no impression upon us: hence it is that the Lord here calls on judges again and again to defend the poor and fatherless, and to deliver the needy out of trouble. So in Rev. ii. iii., Christ calls again and again to those that have ears to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. We must have line upon line, and precept upon precept, and all little enough to make the word effectual. It is not sufficient to say, I know this and that, but you must love to hear it pressed upon you again and again, for your more spiritual improvement of it. He that loves the truth in truth, the more he hears it the more he loves it still.[1] It is but an adulterous love to virgin truth, to be weary of her when you are best acquainted with her, and to cast her off with contempt, as Amnon did Tamar, when you have had your fill of her.

Obs. 4. Magistrates must administer justice orderly. They must not go preposterously to work, and condemn a man before he is heard. But 1. They must fully, freely, patiently, with a sedate, quiet, composed spirit, free from passion, prejudice, and precipitancy, hear both parties speak for themselves, for the law doth not use to condemn men till their cause be heard, John vii. 51; Acts xxv. 15, 16. 2. When, upon hearing, he hath found out the depth and truth of the cause, then he must justify and absolve the innocent, and rescue him out of the jaws of the wicked, by executing justice on him according to his demerits.

Obs. 5. God is very tender over his poor afflicted people. This makes him here once and again to charge his vicegerents to have a special care over them. None must touch them to hurt them; or if they do, the magistrate must rescue them; and if they will not, yet God himself will, Ps. xii. 5; he takes the wrongs that are done to them as done to himself: Prov. xiv. 31, and xvii. 5, He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his maker, and contemns the wise dispensation of God, who will have poor intermingled with the rich, as the valleys are amongst the hills, for his own praise. God would have no man oppressed, be he never so rich; but specially he hates the oppressing of the poor, because low and weak, and cannot help themselves as rich men can. The more unable they are to help themselves, the sooner will God arise to help them; though they be weak, yet their Redeemer is strong, Prov. xxiii. 10, 11. Though they be little, yet their protector is mighty, You may be able to contend with the poor, but can you contend with the Almighty, who

[1] Veritas quo notior, eo charior.

is their guardian?[1] No wise man will contend with a mightier than himself, nor oppress the servants and sons of a prince that can easily suppress and crush him. The poor and fatherless, when believers, are the sons and servants of God, and they cannot escape that wrong them; he hath more than once proclaimed himself their patron and protector, Ps. x. 14, and lxviii. 5; Hosea xiv. 3; Deut. x. 17, 18, and hath denounced woes against those that hurt them, Isa. x. 1–3; Mal. iii. 5, and punished Jerusalem amongst other sins for this, Ezek. xxii. 7. Many think they may abuse the poor, because they are impotent and cannot help themselves, but see how Solomon counsels these men most excellently, Prov. xxii. 22, 23, 'Rob not the poor because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them;' *q.d.*, let not his poverty and inability to withstand thee, encourage thee to abuse him; yea, though thou be one of the magistrates, a man of power that sittest in the gate, yet know that there is a greater than thou, who will help the helpless, will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them; *i.e.*, he will take away the life of those that take away the estate of the afflicted.

Obs. 6. Oppressors of the poor are cruel beasts. They get the poor in their clutches, and as the wolf feeds on his prey, so do they on them, Ps. xvii. 12, till the magistrate by his power do rescue them. Hence for their ferity they are compared to lions, Job iv. 10; wolves, Hab. i. 8; bears, Prov. xvii. 12; dogs, Mat. vii. 6; wild boars, Ps. lxxx. 13; to millers, that grind the poor by their cruelty, Isa. iii. 15; to thrashers, which bruise and oppress the people, Amos i. 3; to butchers, that do not fleece but flay the sheep, Micah iii. 2, 3; hence their teeth are called swords, and their jaw-teeth knives, that they may at once devour the poor from off the earth, Prov. xxx. 14; Ps. lvii. 4. The fourth beast in Daniel's vision had great iron teeth, Dan. vii. 7; he had teeth, great teeth, iron teeth; and all to note what spoil that beast should make amongst the nations.

Obs. 7. Magistrates must improve their power in rescuing the poor out of the paws of the oppressor. To this end they have their power given them, not to oppress the oppressed, or to add affliction to the afflictions of the afflicted, but that they might resemble God, who is a father to the fatherless, and the poor man's refuge. Hence

[1] Gobel, *i.e.*, assertor, vindex, propinquus, consanguineus, redemptor.—*A Lapide in locum.* See more on this point in Mr Gataker's Ser. on Ps. lxxxii. 7, p. 103, 104, part ii., folio.

they are called shepherds. As the shepherd defends the flock, and rescues his lambs from lions and wolves, so must the magistrate by his power defend the lambs of Christ from the sons of violence. So did Job, chap. xxix. 17, he brake the jaws of the wicked, and pulled the spoil out of his teeth.

Obs. 8. Merciless men are wicked men. Those that oppress the poor have this brand set upon them, that they are *reshagnanim*, wicked men. As tenderness, pity, and mercifulness are signs of election, Col. iii. 12, so ferity, cruelty and harshness are signs of reprobation, as we see in Nabal and Dives. See how Job describes the wicked, by enumerating their unmerciful practices, chap. xxiv. 2–12.

Obs. 9. Rich men ofttimes are oppressive men. These wicked men that the prophet speaks of, were not poor men, for they have not the power that rich men have to oppress their brethren; neither do judges use to respect the persons of the poor, as they did these, ver. 2. Riches accidentally make men cruel and insolent. The rich, saith Solomon, rules over the poor, viz., with insolence and violence, Prov. xxii. 7. It were rich men that oppressed the poor, and drew them violently before judgment-seats, James ii. 6; so as when these wicked ones arise, especially to be rulers, the poor, especially the godly poor, hide themselves, Prov. xxviii. 28.

Ver. 5. *They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in the darkness; all the foundations of the earth are out of course.*

This verse is a kind of parenthesis, and contains the Lord's pathetical complaint of that ignorance, stupidity, and obstinacy which he found in the judges of those times; together with the sad effects of it in the commonwealth; the foundations of the earth were out of course.

In this verse the person is changed; God speaks not here to the magistrates themselves, as he did ver. 2. He says not, 'Ye do not know, ye do not understand;' but as one troubled in mind, and mourning within himself to see their desperate malice, and the confusions that attended it, he cries out, 'They have not known, they have no understanding,'[1] *i.e.*, they do not know nor understand. It is frequent in that language to put the præterperfect tense for the present tense; as Ps. i. 1, 'Blessed is the man who hath not walked,' *i.e.*, who doth not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. It notes a continued act, and implies their perseverance in ignorance;[2] *q.d.*, But what do I mean? Why go I about to

[1] Lo jadegnu, non cognoverunt.—*Præterit in Kal.*

[2] Præterita ponnutur pro præsente, et notant actum continuum.—*Piscator.*

make a blackamoor white? It is in vain to reprove this kind of men, or to exhort them to the study of righteousness; for they grow worse and worse; they are so blinded, stupefied and hardened in their sin, that they will go on in their dark and sinful courses, though they ruin themselves, and the commonwealth to boot.

In the words we have all the degrees of comparison, and in them the character of evil judges: 1. These corrupt judges were blind: they know not, that is bad. 2. They will not understand, that is worse. 3. They will walk on in their own dark courses, that is worst of all. 4. Though the whole world be in confusion, and the very foundations of the earth shake under them, partly through their own misgovernment, and partly by the just judgment of God, yet they were stupid and senseless, they took no notice of it, so as to amend what was amiss, but went on still in their perverse practices, till all came to confusion. And this is super-superlative wickedness.

1. Their first degree of evil is ignorance, 'they know not.' They were wise enough to do evil, but to do good they had no knowledge.

Quest. But here a question may arise; since these men were judges in Israel, and had parts, with answerable breeding, no doubt, to fit them for such weighty employment, how then is it said, 'they know not, neither do they understand'?

Ans. The answer is easy. Knowledge is twofold—speculative, or practical. These judges were not fools and ignorant of their duty, they had a theoretical, notional, speculative knowledge of it; they knew that they were God's vicegerents and deputies appointed by him to execute justice and judgment amongst his people impartially, and that they ought to have a tender respect to the poor and the afflicted; and if they did not thus, they knew that God would punish them. All this no doubt, and much more, they had in the theory, having so many prophets as the people of Israel had to instruct them.

2. But if we look upon their practice, so it may be said they have no knowledge;[1] viz., so as to love, affect, and practise what they know. In Scripture, knowledge without practice is counted no knowledge, and hypocritical false things are esteemed as no things.[2] Thus graceless men are accounted as no men, Jer. v. 1, 'Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see if ye can find a man.' Why, the streets were full of men; yea, but because they were not good men, God accounts them as no men. Thus

[1] Verba notitiæ apud Hebræos, affectus comprehendunt.—*See School's Guard*, Rule 11.

[2] The word *jadang*, in the text, implies both knowledge with the mind, and acknowledging and regarding with the affections.

the wicked are said to have no heart, Hos. vii. 11; *i.e.*, no heart to goodness, and then as good have no heart at all. Thus the wicked are said not to hear the law, because they do not hear it rightly, and obedientially. Thus Saul is said to reign but two years over Israel, when he reigned many years: but because in his two first years he reigned well, and after did degenerate, therefore his last reigning was accounted as no reigning. So these judges, though they knew they should judge righteously, without respect of persons, yet they did judge unrighteously, with respect to persons, and therefore God accounted their knowledge as no knowledge; 'they know not.'

'Neither do they understand.' They were stupid, and incapable of good counsel. They did not understand or consider (so much the word imports in the original) [1] the duties of their places, so as to practise them for the good of God's poor, afflicted, oppressed people. The word is frequently used for consideration, as 1 Kings iii. 21, 'When I had considered it in the morning.' So Isa. xiv. 16, and xliii. 18. Consider the things of old, Jer. ii. 10, xxiii. 20. In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. So Job xxiii. 15, and xxxvii. 14. Consider the wondrous works of God, so as to be affected with them.

'They walk on in darkness.' The words in the fountain are very emphatical. 'They will walk on continually in darkness.' [2] They take not a turn or two in this dark alley, but *indesinenter ambulant*, they are always at it, it is their work, their way, their trade, and no man nor means can put them out of it. They will walk on and continue in their wilful ignorance, and sinful perverting of judgment, in despite of God and man. Now to walk in darkness, in Scripture phrase notes, 1. A living in ignorance, [3] Eccles. ii. 14, when men care not to know the will of God, but say as those wicked in Job xxi. 14, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' These corrupt judges walked in ways of darkness, and therefore they loved darkness more than light. This made them err in judgment, as blind men stumble at everything that lies in their way; and hence came that sedition, tumult, and confusion in the state. 2. To walk in darkness, is to lie in a natural condition, and live in a state of sin

[1] Jabinu, from Binah intellexit, consideravit.—*Pagnin.*

[2] It is not hallacu, ambulabunt, but Iithhallacu, ambulabunt indesinenter. Nam verba in conjugatione Hithpael significationem intendunt, immo habitum, vehementiam et frequentiam denotant.—*Pagnin.*

[3] Ostendit ignorantiam istorum judicum fuisse voluntariam, ut qui noluerint ex lege Dei discere quid sui esset officii.—*Piscator.*

and ignorance, without any saving knowledge of God, John viii. 12, and xii. 46; Prov. ii. 13; 1 John i. 6, and ii. 11. By nature these men were blind, but being drunken with pleasures, and besotted with the lusts of covetousness, bribery, private affection, and puffed up with the greatness of their power, they had contracted a habitual blindness, so that they could not discern right from wrong, darkness from light, nor truth from error. Their lusts had blinded them, and put out their eyes, so that they could not see the duties of their places, nor remember the great account which they must one day give unto God of their stewardship: but as Samson when he had lost his eyes was abused and put to grind in a mill, so these being blinded by Satan, were made to grind in the mill of every sin and error.

'All the foundations of the earth are out of course.' These words have almost as many interpretations as there be interpreters:—1. Some add the word, albeit or although, to the text; they walk on in darkness, albeit the foundations of the earth be moved; and so they make these words an aggravation of that prodigious stupidity which had possessed those great ones of the world, *q.d.*, Such is their sottishness and senselessness, that though all the world be in confusion, and heaven and earth be ready to come together, yet do they snort in their security, and will by no means be quickened to the execution of justice, that they might prevent destruction.

This sense is good, but with submission to better judgments, I conceive the words may be taken as they are in themselves, without any addition, for the sad effect and consequent of that ignorance, unrighteousness, cruelty, and stupidity which reigned in their rulers,—viz., that by reason of it all the foundations of the earth were out of course,[1] *i.e.*, all laws were broken, all orders violated, the wicked were encouraged, the godly discountenanced, the public peace disturbed, and the state of all things turned upside down; nothing but murder, rapes, rapine, violence, and all outrage to be found. No man knows where to have right, or by whom to be protected from wrong. Yet they know not, neither will they understand, they will walk on in darkness; and what is the issue of all this? Why, the very foundations of the earth will move. So it is in the original, *i.e.*, all things will run into confusion and disorder by reason of the stupidity and wilful disobedience of the rulers of this people, Ps. lx. 2; Isa. xxiv. 19, 20. Others make

[1] Jimmotu, a mot., nutabunt, declinabunt omnia fundamenta terræ.—*Mercer apud Pagnin.* Fundamenta terræ videtur nominare ea quibus salus publica nititur; ea vero sunt recta administratio juris, conservatio disciplinæ et pacis, defensio innocentum, et pœnæ scelerum.—*Moller.*

the words a commination of some destruction at hand, the foundations of the earth shall be moved, they read the word passively, *q.d.*, God will destroy that nation where such ill magistrates bear sway;[1] as a house whose foundation is taken away cannot stand; so since the rulers of my people who should be the upholders of the land, by executing justice, are become the destroyers of it, I will destroy them altogether. But the former sense is most genuine; for although the Septuagint do frequently render the verb passively, yet why we should forsake the original, as the vulgar Latin frequently doth, to follow the Septuagint, I see no reason, especially if we consider the corruptness of the Septuagint which now we have. Take but one place for instance; Isa. ix. 6, speaking of Christ, the Septuagint put ἄγγελος, for *Deus*, and leave out many of Christ's titles there which prove his deity. I speak not in the least to disparage that princely work of that reverend and learned man,[2] whose labours praise him in the gates, and for which I desire to bless the God of heaven, and have long since received it with a χάιρε φῶς. But I speak it to this end, to caution young men not to lay too much stress upon the Septuagint, considering what the learned have said of it. *Ista Græca Versio quam nunc habemus, in plurimis locis dissentit ab Hebræo; multa habet quæ non sunt in Hebræo, ut omnes noverunt qui in ea versati sunt.*—Philo.

Licet non ignorem nonnullos in ea sententia esse, ut existiment interpretationem LXX. seniorum penitus interiisse; multo probabilius censeo illam adhuc superesse: sed adeo corruptam et vitiatam, ut omnino alia esse videatur. Bellarmin., lib. ii. de Verbo Dei., cap. 6. *Nos summo studio, cura et diligentia LXX. interpretationem cum Hebræo contulimus, et tot invenimus addita, dempta, depravata, immutata, et ab Hebraico prorsus aliena, ut mihi persuadere nequeam illam esse LXX. interpretum.*—Pagan.

Periodos integras omisere, nec non capita integra.—Capellus.

But this point is so excellently cleared by the learned Dr Walton in his Apparatus, Prolegom. 9, that I shall only refer you thither for better satisfaction.[3]

In the words is set forth to us:—1. What it is that is out of course: The earth,[4] *i.e.*, the inhabitants of the earth.

2. What part of the earth? Not the superficies or surface, but the very foundation of the earth,[5] by which metaphorically is meant

[1] Manifeste dicitur de principibus a justitia et pietate declinantibus, qui moveri, *i.e.*, non consistere in vera via et statione, dicuntur; ideo illis graves minatur pœnas. —*Illyricus.*

[2] Dr Walton.

[3] See Mr Leigh his Body of Divinity, lib. i., cap. 7, p. 72.

[4] Met. subjecti.

[5] It is a hyperbolical proverbial metaphor.

the due administration of justice in punishing the wicked and defending the good. These be the pillars that uphold the world, and upon these commonwealths are chiefly founded.

3. Here is the extent of this confusion; not some but all the foundations of the earth are out of course. Those that should be the pillars of the earth, they are rotten posts that deceive the building and let all run to ruin.

Obs. 1. All reprehensions and admonitions that are bestowed on wilfully blind and obstinate sinners, are lost, and in vain, as to the parties reproved, though our labour be not vain in the Lord,[1] Isa. xlix. 4; 2 Cor. ii. 15, we do but wash a blackamoor, or wash a tile;[2] the more rain is poured on it, the blacker it grows. When men are set, given up and wedded to their sins, it is time to let them alone, Hosea iv. 14, 17. This made the Lord here leave off complaining to these judges, and to turn his complaint to himself and to his people. 'They know not, they will not understand.' God will not honour them now so far as to reprove them. Thus did the prophets when men were obstinate, past counsel and instruction, they turned to the earth and called upon the inanimate creatures to hear: Isa. i. 2, 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth:' so Micah vi. 2, 'Hear, O mountains, the Lord's controversy:' so Deut. iv. 26, and xxxii. 1; Jer. vi. 19, and xxii. 29. That preacher thinks his people very bad indeed, who directs his speech to the seats they sit on, and the pillars they lean to, *q.d.*, Hear, O ye seats, and hearken, O ye pillars, what the Lord hath done for an ungrateful and rebellious people. These are scorners that do but jeer at such as call on them to live soberly, righteously, and religiously. Solomon bids us not reprove such, lest they hate us, Prov. ix. 8. These are dogs that fly in the face of such as go about to stop them in their sinful practices, Mat. vii. 6.

Quest. But is not this a sufficient excuse to make us cease from reproving sinners?

Ans. No; for the Holy Ghost before in this psalm, though he knew those he spake to were incorrigible and incurable, yet reproves them first, and admonisheth them to do their duty, ver. 2-4, for though such wicked men be not amended, yet we have discharged our duty, and they will be left without excuse in the day of the Lord, when they shall see and say they had a prophet amongst them to warn them, Ezek. ii. 9.

2. We must be very cautious that we do not presently cast off

[1] See Mr Lyford's Ser. on 2 Cor. ii. 15. [2] Laterem lavare. Proverb.

every wicked man as a dog, that frets at reproof;[1] for a good Asa may do so, 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 10. The Lord himself is patient and bears long, and loath he is to cast off his people, Hosea vi. 4. Now when the Lord bears, we may well bear; but he 'bears with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath who are fitted to destruction,' Rom. ix. 22.

Obs. 2. Ignorance is the mother of mischief. These judges judge unjustly, respect persons, neglect their duties, oppress the poor, &c.; but what was the cause of all this? He tells you, 'They know not, neither will they understand.' This in Scripture is oft set forth as the root of all sin, Hosea iv. 1, 2, there is no mercy, no truth; nothing but killing, lying, stealing, and outrage; and why so? Why, there is no knowledge of God in the land, so Isa. i. 3, 4; 1 Pet. i. 14; Rev. iii. 17; one great cause of the church of Laodicea's misery was this, that she knew not her misery. Ignorance, and working uncleanness with greediness, are joined together, Eph. iv. 18, 19. This made the Jews to crucify Christ: Acts iii. 17, 'I wot, brethren, that through ignorance ye did it;' and Paul to blaspheme and persecute God's people, 1 Tim. i. 13. I did it ignorantly. When the Gentiles knew not God, then they served idols, Gal. iv. 8. Why is not God loved, feared, obeyed? Why, because he is not known; for as *incognitum non amatur*, so *non timetur*. Children that know not the strength and terror of a lion, fear him not. This made the Sadducees to err: Mat. xxii. 29, 'Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures.' All sins and errors are radically, seminally, and fundamentally in ignorance.[2] When the apostle had said, There is none that understands, see what a black guard of sins do follow, Rom. i. 28–32, and iii. 11–19; when the eyes of the Jews were blinded, then all wickedness like a flood broke in upon them, and there abides even to this day,[3] Rom. xi. 8.

Ignorance is evil in any, but specially in such as are designed for public service. A magistrate that is ignorant of the law, and a minister of the gospel, are two sore judgments; the one destroys many a soul, and the other mars many a good cause: 'A prince that wanteth understanding is a great oppressor,' saith Solomon, Prov. xxviii. 16. It is a great misery to a nation when the rulers are children in understanding, Eccles. x. 16; Isa. iii. 4. Magis-

[1] See this point fully stated by Mr Reyner in his Government of the Tongue, p. 170, &c. And Mr Cudworth on Gal. vi. 1, p. 351, &c.

[2] Omnis malus cæcus et ignorans.—*Aristot.*

[3] See more in Mr Pemble's Ser. on Hosea iv. 6, The Mischief of Ignorance, and Mr Clerk's Mirror, chap. liv.

trates had need of abundance of wisdom and prudence; sinners are subtle to contrive wickedness, and magistrates had need of serpentine wisdom to search it out. For as truth, so wickedness lieth *in profundo*, it is buried deep, Isa. xxix. 15.

It is not for kings, say flatterers, to read, pray, study; they must hawk and hunt, and game and take their pleasure, as if God had made them for no other end in the world; but as he hath done the leviathan in the sea, to take his pleasure therein, Ps. civ. 26. No, God commands kings to write, read, and study his law, Deut. xvii. 18, 19. It must be their *vade mecum*, their constant companion, which they must study as well as the laws of the land. It is necessary that rulers should see with their own eyes, that they be not seduced by flatterers and parasites. We read how Moses, the chief magistrate, was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians before he was called to government. Tongues, arts, sciences, philosophy, history, law, divinity, are all requisite to make a complete magistrate.[1] They must not only be honest men, but able men, Exod. xviii. 21, men of parts, gifts, and understanding, Deut. i. 13; men, as we say, cut out for the work; for as every one that is godly is not fit to teach others; so every one that hath grace is not fit to rule others. They must be men dexterous in the law, else how shall they direct others according to law? When rulers are children in gifts, though men in years, and babes for understanding, being weak as women, then follows oppression and confusion, Isa. iii. 4, 5, 12. As no wise man will go to an unskilful physician for physic; nor venture himself in that ship that hath an unskilful pilot; so no man that is well in his wits will venture his cause in the hands of an ignorant judge. As unsavoury salt is good for nothing; so raw and rude rulers are the pests of their places.

Obs. 3. Knowledge without practice is no knowledge in God's esteem. In divinity we know no more then we practise.[2] To the Jews were committed the oracles of God, and they had great skill in the letter of the law; but because they did not practise it, God complains of them as ignorant, Isa. v. 13; Hosea iv. 6. Yea, the priests are said not to know the law, 1 Sam. ii. 12; Jer. ii. 8, and iv. 22; they were priests, and so could not be totally ignorant;[3] but because their knowledge was merely notional and speculative, with-

[1] How necessary all kind of knowledge is, see à Lapide, Encomium Sapientiæ Ethicæ, Naturalis, et Divinæ; in Prefat. ad Ecclesiasticum, p. 1, 2, &c.

[2] Tantum scimus, quantum operamur.

[3] Multi habent cognitionem salutis, sed non cognitionem salutarem.

out obedience and practice, therefore God accounted it as no knowledge. Thus cruel, oppressing rulers, though they had some speculative knowledge, yet because they hated the good, and loved the evil, they are said not to know judgment, viz., so as to practise it, Jer. x. 21; Micah iii. 1, 2; Prov. xxix. 7.

Rest not then content with shows and shadows; let not Satan cozen thee with the leaves of speculation and external profession; but let thy knowledge be an effective, practical, obediential knowledge;[1] else knowledge without practice will but double your stripes, and increase your condemnation, Luke xii. 47; John ix. *ult.;* James iv. *ult.* Where the spirit of regeneration comes, it brings a light with it, Eph. i. 17, 18, and v. 14; not a natural, but a divine, supernatural light; not a cold light, like that of the moon: but a burning light, like that of the sun, John v. 35; it is not a fading, vanishing light, but it is an abiding, enduring light, which all the devils in hell shall never extinguish.[2] As the joy, so the light of God's elect, though it may be for a time eclipsed, yet shall never be totally taken from them. A natural man may have a little glimmering twilight; but this is a soul-awaking, sin-conquering, soul-convincing, soul-commanding light; it is effectual in the hearts of believers, and makes them grow in grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. There may be knowledge without grace, but there can be no grace without knowledge. Knowledge is the oil in which the flame of the Spirit lives. 1. It is the saving knowledge of the truth that sanctifies us, and delivers from the bondage of sin in which by nature we are entangled, John viii. 31, 32, and xvii. 17. 2. It increaseth faith, Ps. ix. 10, 'they that know thee will trust in thee.'[3] 3. It will make us love him more intensively; the more experimentally we know God, the more we shall love him, Cant. i. 4. 4. It will make us patient under all afflictions, when we know and see that the Lord corrects us for our profit, Heb. xii. 10. 5. It will make us slight these transitory things, when we are truly convinced of the vanity of them, Eccles. i. 2; Heb. xi. 24–26.

Obs. 4. Want of consideration makes men neglect the duties of their callings. These judges did not consider that God sat amongst them, and considered their sentences, ends, and aims; this made them pass such unrighteous sentences. Inconsiderateness makes

[1] Cognitio veritatis est duplex; pure speculativa, vel affectiva.—*Aquinas. Vide* Dyke on the Sacrament, chap. iv.; Usher's Meditations, p. 1.

[2] See the difference between common and saving knowledge. Dr Preston's Saint's Infirmities, p. 159, 160.

[3] Quantum cognoscimus, tantum diligimus; quia dilectio sequitur cognitionem, cum ignoti nulla sit cupido.

sin abound, Lam. i. 9. They are sinners and fools that consider not what they do, Eccles. v. 1. This ruins kings and kingdoms, Isa. i. 3, 4, and v. 12; Jer. xii. 11; Hosea vii. 2. This ruined Eve; she no sooner saw the fruit, but she presently eats of it, without any consideration of the misery that attended it,[1] Gen. iii. 6. Did the drunkard but consider the many woes that attend that sin, he would not rush into sin, as the horse into the battle, with such desperate violence. So we may say of all other sinners, Jer. viii. 6.

Obs. 5. Wicked men are wilful men. They are obstinate in sin, and will walk on, whatever come on it. Had these rulers sinned of mere simple ignorance, it might have excused them *à tanto*, though not *à toto;* it might have extenuated their sin: but their ignorance being a gross, wilful, affected, and contracted ignorance, rejecting instruction, that they might sin more freely, could neither excuse them *à tanto*, *nec à toto*, not in the least; but it did highly aggravate their wickedness.[2] This is made a frequent character of wicked men, that they are wilful sinners; they have necks of iron, and brows of brass; though they are persuaded, yet they are unpersuadable. They will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. They say to God, as those wicked in Job xxi. 14, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;' their ignorance is a spontaneous willing ignorance, 2 Pet. iii. 5, they might know, but they will not. Like those rebellious Jews, when God commanded them to walk in his paths, they peremptorily answer, We will not walk in them, Jer. vi. 16, and xliv. 16, 17; 'let favour be showed to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness: in a land of uprightness they will do unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord: yea, though his hand be lifted up in judgment, yet they will not see,'[3] Isa. xxvi. 10, 11. Here are four *will-nots* that aggravate their sin. Let strangers devour their strength, and gray hairs (the symptoms of feebleness, old age, and death approaching) be upon them, yet so stupid are they, that they perceive it not, Hosea vii. 9; let God be a tender nurse to lead and love them, yet so sottish are they that they neither know nor acknowledge it, Hosea xi. 1, 3, 4; Zeph. iii. 7. These are wedded to their lusts, and there is no parting of them, Hosea iv. 14, 17.[4]

[1] See more in my Comment on 2 Tim. iii. 4, p. 117, 118.

[2] Ignorantia crassa et affectata jus scire spernit, ut liberius peccet; hæc aggravat peccatum: 1. Quia fit ex socordia, ut in otiosis. 2. Quia fit ex philautia, ut in superbis. 3. Quia fit ex malitia, ut in desperatis, quorum vox est, scientiam tuarum viarum nolumus.—*Breerwood Ethic.*, lib. iii. p. 121.

[3] See Fenner's Wilfull Impenitency.

[4] See the danger of obstinacy, in Attersoll on Num., p. 622, &c., folio.

Obs. 6. To persevere in wickedness is the height of wickedness. None so wicked as the resolvedly wicked. They will walk on in darkness, and that continually; it is their trade, and they will not leave it. The best may fall through weakness, but these are wilful. As resolution and perseverance in goodness is the height of goodness, as we see in Job, chap. ii. 3, who kept his integrity in despite of all that the devil could do; and Noah, though he lived in a corrupt age, yet, in despite of them all, he sets his heart on God, and resolvedly walked with him all his days, Gen. vi. 9; and Hezekiah, when he came to die, comforts himself with this, 'Remember, O Lord, how I walked before thee (continually, or without ceasing—so it is in the fountain) with an upright heart,' Isa. xxxviii. 3, so perseverance in wickedness is the height of wickedness, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22.

Obs. 7. Wicked men lead miserable lives. They walk in darkness. We pity such prisoners as lie and live in deep dark dungeons all their days. Why, this is the state of every wicked man; though they think themselves the only wise men, and that none see but themselves, as the Pharisees did, John vii. 49, and ix. *ult.*, yet there is no prisoner that lies in the darkest dungeon, especially if he be godly, but is in a better condition than the greatest wicked man, that is spiritually blind, though he live in pompous palaces. These rulers in the text, no doubt but they thought themselves very wise men—and probably they were so in respect of natural and worldly accomplishments—yet because they abused their parts, and did not improve them for God's glory, he tells us here, 'They walk in darkness.' The princes of Zoan are called fools, *i.e.*, Pharaoh's counsellors, which were worldly-wise men, yet, for want of saving knowledge, are called fools in God's dictionary, Isa. xix. 11.

This will yet better appear if we consider the allusions between inward and outward darkness. 1. Darkness hinders us from seeing our way. A man that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes, John xii. 35; he may go into ditches, bogs, rivers, and miscarry many ways; so he that walks in spiritual darkness knows not which way to go, nor what to do: he is in perpetual danger of falling into this ditch of error, and that bog of heresy, and to plunge himself into a world of sin and sorrow. Blind men cannot judge of colours, nor can these distinguish between truth and falsehood.

2. Such catch many falls, and stumble at everything; so when men's ways are dark and slippery, they are apt to fall every way into Satan's snares, Job v. 14, and xii. 17, 25, and to stumble and take offence even at Christ himself.

3. Darkness is a dismal thing, it fills men with fear and horror, Gen. xv. 12, so that a man hath no joy of himself nor of the creature; so a man that lies in spiritual darkness, being destitute of saving knowledge, when conscience is awakened, he is filled with horror and desperation, which imbitters all creature comforts to him. Let us therefore labour for saving knowledge, and above all getting, get true understanding. Solomon prefers it before silver, gold, and pearls, Prov. ii. 2–4, because it brings grace, life, and salvation with it. Multiplicity of this knowledge will multiply grace, 2 Pet. i. 2. This will be a light unto our feet, and a lamp to our paths.[1] This light is a pleasant thing; by it we see whence we came, whither we go, how to order our steps, what dangers to shun, what enemies lie in our way, that we may resist them. Such are wise whose eyes are in their heads, but it is the fool that walks on in darkness, Eccles. ii. 14: *q.d.*, a wise man is well advised, and goeth prudently to work; but a foolish man is imprudent, and unadvised in all his ways.

Obs. 8. Justice and judgment are the foundations of a land, Ps. xi. 3. A house may as soon stand without a foundation as a commonwealth without government. When the righteous are encouraged, and the wicked punished, this upholds a throne, and establisheth a land, Prov. xvi. 12, and xxix. 4. Good laws are the foundation of a nation, but the iniquity of judges moves these foundations out of place, and makes the state like a bowing wall that belcheth out, or a tottering fence, Ps. lxii. 3; Isa. xxx. 13. It was therefore a notable piece of policy in Absalom, when he would steal away the hearts of the people from David, he went about to persuade them that the king his father had no justice for them; but oh that he were made judge in the land, that every one that had any cause might come to him, and he would do them justice, 2 Sam. xv. 3, 4.

Let us therefore pray for those in authority, that God would give them wise and understanding hearts to know their duty, and, knowing it, to practise it, that under them we may lead pious, peaceable, and honest lives; for if these foundations once fail, and we have either no magistrate, or corrupt ones, all will run into confusion. When once wickedness comes to be established by a law, the sin becomes national, and national sins bring national judgments; and therefore you may observe in Scripture, and in all histories, that when the rulers of a people have been wicked, ruin suddenly fol-

[1] See the Excellency of Light. Culverwell, Light of Nature, chap. xvii., pp. 173, 175, &c.

lowed, Isa. i. 23, 24; Jer. v. 28, 29; Micah iii. 11, 12. What potent and flourishing nations have been laid in the dust by popish, tyrannical, cruel governors!

Obs. 9. Wicked men are stupid men. Let foundations be moved, and all things run into confusion by their means; yet they are senseless, sit still, and take their ease, never regarding the afflictions of God's people, Esther iii. *ult.* Let all move, yet they will not move; let the Lord bind them and beat them, yet they cry not, Job xxxvi. 13; though they lie amidst a sea of troubles, and themselves be as one that is on the top of a mast, yet there can they sleep fearlessly in the midst of the greatest dangers: though they be stricken, yet they stir not, so great is their lethargy, Prov. xxiii. 35, 36. Pharaoh had plague upon plague, yet nothing mended him, but he was Pharaoh still. Hence wicked men are called brutish, Jer. x. 21, and dead: lay all the world on a dead man, and he feels it not. Rob them, ransack them, and let the fire of God's displeasure seize on them, yet they lay it not to heart, Isa. xlii. 24, 25. It is only good men that are tender, sensible men, and mourn for the afflictions of Joseph.

Ver. 6, 7. *I have said ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High.*

But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

These words are a kind of prolepsis, where the Lord meets with the pride of rulers who are puffed up with a high conceit of themselves, because these are by place exalted above others. We, say they, are styled gods; yea, God himself hath styled us so, and hath made us deputies immediately under himself.[1] To this the Spirit of God answers, 1. By way of a reprehensory concession: It is true I have said ye are gods, and I have appointed you for my vicars and deputies on earth, to judge for me amongst men, and to keep my people in peace; but you have abused your power, and ungratefully sinned against the God of your mercies, who hath exalted you from amongst your brethren to rule for him. 2. By way of correction: Yet I must tell you, you shall die like other men, and come to judgment, and therefore you have little reason to be proud of that power which is delegated to you. Or here is, 1. Their dignity and majesty, by reason of the eminency of their office—ye are gods: 2. Their frailty and mortality, common to them with other sons of

[1] His verbis usus est, non *εἰρηνικῶς*, aut tantum *συγχωρητικῶς* et concessive, sed magis *ἐπιτιμητικῶς* et reprehensive; ut potentiorum authoritate sua abutentium iniquitatem amplius ostenderet, evinceretque Dei ipsius verbis.—*Junius' Parallel*, 17.

Adam, in respect of their human condition—ye shall die like men. Or, if you please, here is, 1. The root of their unrighteous and exorbitant practices, viz., the pride that reigned in them, by reason of that dignity which God had honoured them withal, in communicating his own name unto them, and calling them his sons. 2. Here is the remedy, drawn from the consideration of their dying and fading condition: 1. They must die like other ordinary men; 2. They must fall from their dignity to the dust, as other great ones had done before them; so that in the words we have the excellency of magistracy set forth by two titles:—1. They are gods; 2. Sons of the Most High.

1. They are gods, not by nature, for we see they die, but by similitude, and in respect of their office, because they represent God's majesty in governing of men, and have a special character of his glory stamped upon them.[1] But of this see more at large on ver. 1.

2. Children of the Most High, or sons of the most high God. This title is homonymous, and hath many significations in Scripture.[2] 1. It is sometimes taken for the natural Son of God, and in this sense Christ is the only natural and proper Son of God, John i. 14, and v. 18; Mat. iii. 17; Rom. viii. 32.

2. For the sons of God by creation. So God is called the Father of angels, Job i. 6, and xxxviii. 7; Cant. ii. 3; and of wicked men, Mal. ii. 10.

3. Others are called his sons by adoption: thus all true believers are the sons of God, John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14, 16; Gal. iv. 5; 1 John iii. 2.

4. Others are called the sons of God in respect of that power, majesty, authority, and eminency which God hath conferred upon them above the ordinary sort of men; and in this respect it is that magistrates are called the sons of God; for as parents give some part of their inheritance to their children, so the Almighty hath invested magistrates with part of his power and sovereignty, and intrusted them with the administration of his earthly kingdoms, by the exercise of vindictive and remunerative justice.

Now, some conceive that magistrates are called the sons of God because they are more dear to God, and more acceptable to him than other men; but that will not hold; for in this very psalm where he calls them gods, yet he sharply reproves them for their

[1] Non participatione divinæ essentiæ, sed similitudine divinæ potentiæ. Non natura, sed conditione et dignitate muneris.—*Muis in locum.*

[2] Gnelion, filii Excelsi, viz., Dei, quia Deus est excelsus super omnem terram, et valde exaltatus super omnes deos.

unrighteous practices; and if rulers be wicked, they bring more dishonour to God, and do more mischief than inferior persons can do; and so their persons are more displeasing to God than inferior persons are, and God looks upon them as beasts rather than men, Prov. xxviii. 15. But if magistrates be truly godly, then they are the sons of God in a double sense; 1. As believers; 2. As magistrates; and so they are nearer and dearer to God than ordinary men; they are as the signet on his right hand, ever in his eye; he looks upon them as his ornaments. As the devil useth all means to get men of power and parts on his side, that he may the better advance his kingdom;[1] so God delights in gracious magistrates as the pillars and upholders of his kingdom in the world. The more of God dwells in any, the more he loves them. If magistrates who are gods in name do resemble God indeed in wisdom, justice, purity, clemency, &c., then are they the children of the Most High in a spiritual sense, and God hath a paternal care over such, even as parents have over their obedient children.

2. This implies participation, and tells us that magistrates derive all their power from God, as a son hath his from his father; and therefore it is but equity that they should employ that power, which they have received from his goodness, to the praise of him that gave it.

3. Here is the extent of this dignity; it is not given only to superior magistrates, but to inferior ones also. 'Ye are all the children of the Most High;' yea, wicked ones, when placed in authority, are called gods and sons of the Most High. Those in the psalm were none of the best, yea, they were almost as bad as bad could be, ver. 2, 5. And yet it is said here, I have said ye (in respect of your office) are gods, and children of God.

4. Here is their commission,[2] I have said. It is not you that can make yourselves magistrates, but it is I that say ye are gods; all the power that ye have is from me; and therefore our Saviour expounding this of the psalmist, John x. 34–36, tells us that to magistrates the word of the Lord came, or was made, *q.d.*, they have their command, commission, and power from God to discharge the duties of their places. When the prophets were sent to preach, the word of the Lord was said to come to them, Luke iii. 2, 'The word of God came to John;' and then, ver. 3, he preacheth and puts his commission in execution. So, when God hath given magistrates a word of command, then, and not till then, they may

[1] *Quærit abs te ornari diabolus*, as Augustine said of a learned man.

[2] Ego dixi, est vox potestatis constituentis.

act with comfort and with confidence. Our Saviour, in John x. 34, refers us hither. When the Pharisees reproached him for blasphemy, because he made himself equal to God, by saying, 'My Father and I are one,' he clears himself from that aspersion by an argument from the less to the greater. Thus: If the title of God may be given to princes, who are but men, and many times the worst of men, then much more may that title be given to me, in whom the majesty of God doth more especially appear, and the fulness of his godhead dwell. The antecedent I have proved to you, saith Christ, out of your law, which you cannot deny, and therefore you must grant the consequent.

Ver. 7. In this verse we have the mortality of magistrates asserted in two words—1. Ye shall die; 2. Ye shall fall.

2. The manner how—as other ordinary men, and as all other princes have done before you.

3. The certainty of this is confirmed by an asseverative particle, Verily or certainly; as ye live like gods, so certainly ye shall die like men.

The words have some difficulty and various readings. I shall briefly explain them, and then proceed to the observations.

But ye shall die like men. Some read surely or truly ye shall die; and this comes nearest the original, for so the word (achen)[1] is used in Scripture, as Gen. xxviii. 16, 'Surely (achen) the Lord is in the place;' so Isa. xl. 7, 'Surely the people is grass;' and Isa. liii. 4, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs.' It is true the vulgar Latin, that so oft leaves the fountain to follow the Septuagint, do with them render it *but*. But the most genuine signification of the word is *surely*. The sense is good either way. But, *i.e.*, for all your pomp and power you must at last lie in the dust, and say to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my brother and sister, Job xvii. 14; or, Surely, *i.e.*, though you regard it not, nor make any provision for it, but flatter yourselves because you are gods, and so dream that ye shall live on earth for ever; yet know assuredly that ye are but men, and must die as well as others. All God's words are true and sure; but on some there is affixed a special note of certainty, because of man's (especially great men's) extraordinary sottishness and infidelity.

'Ye shall die like men.' That is, like other ordinary men; as ye came from the earth, so to earth you must return. Death fears not

[1] *Achen*, certe, vere, profecto, sane, est adverbium affirmandi.—*Pagnin, Montanus, Calvin.*

you more than other men. Ish and Adam,[1] the noble and ignoble, are alike to that grim sergeant Death. Though men have lived like gods, yet they must die like Adam, or any other base, contemptible man; yea, if wicked, ye shall die like beasts for all your honour, Ps. xlix. 20; though in respect of your dignity you have been like Saul, taller by the head and shoulders than the rest of the people, yet in your death there shall be no difference; you must to the grave as other men, and then to judgment, for that is included in the word death. Heb. ix. 27, 'It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death comes judgment.'

'And fall like one of the princes.' These words have many glosses put upon them. 1. Some understand them of a fall by a natural death, *q.d.*, Ye rulers of the people, for all your state and pomp, shall fall by death like others of your rank that have been before you, that were as high in honour and great in power as yourselves; and yet they died, and so must you.[2] Their graves amongst you read a lecture of mortality to you; they are gone off the stage of the world, and you are come on; it is not long, but you also must die and make room for your successors; and thus the word fall is put for dying in Scripture, Gen. xiv. 10; Ps. xci. 7.

2. Others take this fall to be by a violent death. He had before said they should die as other men; but now he riseth higher, and tells them of a more especial judgment which should befall them rather than others, and that is, 'ye shall fall;' how is that? Why, for your tyranny and abuse of your power against God and his people ye shall be cast out of your seats; your pride shall have a fall, and that by a violent death;[3] for so I find the word fall taken very frequently in Scripture for perishing by a violent death, as falling by the sword, Exod. xxxii. 28; Hosea v. 5, and vii. 7; or by the pestilence, 1 Chron. xxi. 14; 1 Cor. x. 8. Tyrants seldom go to their graves in peace. Most of the Cæsars fell by the hands of the people, *q.d.*, If you be like tyrants[4] in sin, expect to be like them in punishment; as I cast them out of their thrones for their

[1] *Che Adam temutun*, sicut Adam, *i.e.*, homo terrenus, vilis, abjectus, moriemini. Adam, *i.e.*, homo plebeius, opponitur τῷ Ish, *i.e.*, vero nobili, ut videre est, Ps. iv. 3, xlix. 2, and lxii. 9.

[2] Aliorum funera sint vobis specula, in quibus vestra, citius fortasse quam putatis, affutura spectetis.—*Mendoza.*

[3] Non tantum minatur deus ipsos morituros, sed ita morituros, ut etiam casuri sint de sedibus suis.—*Scultetus.*

[4] Notanter dicit *Hassarim*, illorum principum.—*Muscul.* *Sar* est princeps, et *sarim* principes, Jer. iv. 9, and xvii. 25. Sicut unus principum, *i.e.*, profanarum gentium.—*Synech. Gen. Piscat.* Ye shall fall like one of the tyrants.—*Tyndal.*

insolence and violence, so will I cast you out, and you shall fall like one of these tyrannical princes.

3. Others take it for the falling as the princes of other nations, *q.d.*, though you are the princes of God's people, yet are you not thereby privileged from the arrest of death; for the most gracious saint dieth as well as the most notorious sinner. Grace is an antidote against the poison of death, but not a preservative against undergoing death.

4. Others take it for a falling from a high and flourishing condition, so as they shall be had in contempt of all.[1] This is a truth, and the word fall is oft so used in Scripture, Isa. iii. 8; Ps. cxvii. 13; Jer. li. 8. But this sense is too strait for this place. The exegesis implies a greater falling than from their estates.

5. Other learned men render the words thus: And ye shall fall like others, or ye shall fall like one of the vulgar.[2] But this version will not hold, and that for two reasons. 1. It hath no foundation in the original, nor in the Septuagint, nor in any of the Oriental versions. 2. It is a pure tautology; ye shall die like Adam, *i.e.*, like ordinary men, and shall fall like one of the vulgar, *i.e.*, like ordinary men. The three first senses are most genuine, as agreeing best with the original, the sense of the text, and the like Scripture phrase.[3] The sum and substance of all is this, *q.d.*, It is true I have said, and I say so still, that ye are by office gods, and by commission ye are all the sons of the most high God, whom he hath intrusted with some part of his judiciary power; but yet this doth not exempt you from mortality; for though in dignity you are above others, yet death will level you, and you must to the grave as well as others who are ordinary men, and as others of your own rank have done before you; and then you who have judged others shall be judged with others; for after death comes judgment.

Obs. 1. The Scriptures of the Old Testament are the word of God. Christ cites this very text in the New Testament, John x. 34, 35, against the calumniating Pharisees; yea, Christ and his apostles, to shew the divine authority of the Old Testament even in gospel times, did fetch arguments ofttimes out of the Old Testa-

[1] De summo gradu ad imum, de magna gloria ad extremam miseriam præcipitabimini.—*Bellarmin.*

[2] Unus quemlibet e vulgo significat.—*Calvin.* Some there are that follow him against the letter of the text, which runs thus: *Sicut unus principum cadetis.* It is not *sicut unus vulgi, vel e vulgo.* I honour that eminent instrument of God, but the text and truth I must honour above all.

[3] The metaphrase.

ment to confirm their doctrine and practice. About four hundred places are cited out of the Old Testament in the New. But of this I have spoken elsewhere at large.[1]

Obs. 2. Magistrates have their power and commission from God. It is he that said, and it is his word that comes to them which makes them gods on earth. Magistracy is no fancy of man's inventing, nor plant of his planting, for then it had long since been rooted up by those sons of Belial that have so oft opposed it, yet could never prevail against it. If God had not been in this bush, (so oft set on fire,) it had been consumed long ere this; it could never have stood so many thousand years against the rage and fury of men and devils. We may use the same argument to prove the divinity of magistracy, which sometimes we do to prove the divinity of the Scriptures—viz., the strange preservation of it in all revolutions and changes, amidst those wars and confusions which have been in the world. Some indeed have thrown off their governors, but never yet could throw off a government. As soon as one is off, another is in the saddle; yea, so co-natural it is to the principles and notions of man's mind, that a government is found even amongst heathens, where no Scripture is found to teach it. But of this see more on ver. 1.

Obs. 3. It is lawful to give titles of honour even to wicked magistrates. Those in this psalm were none of the best, yea, all things considered, they were as vile as the vilest; yet you see the Holy Ghost gives them their titles of honour still, 'I have said, Ye are gods:' and as if that were not sufficient, he presently adds, and ye are *all*—mark that, not good magistrates only, but also the bad, even all (in respect of their place and office) are the children of the Most High; which may for ever silence those sots, which say, we may give titles of honour to godly magistrates, but not to the ungodly. But of this see more, ver. 1.

Obs. 4. Even wicked magistrates have their power from God, Rom. xiii. 1. All power is of God;[2] and yet the rulers at that time were heathenish persecutors. It is true, the abuse of the power is not from God, but the power itself is; as the abuse of the ministry and marriage are not of God, though the ministry and marriage itself be. Be the magistrates superior or inferior, wise

[1] See my Commentary on 2 Tim. iii. 15, p. 262.

[2] All power is from God *qua efficiens*, and unjust power *qua non impediens*. Distinguendum est inter potestatem in se, et potestatem in subjecto. Potestas in se est a Deo instituta, sed non semper in subjecto est justa et legitima propter usurpationem et abusum.—*Rivet.*

men or fools, good or bad, there is no power but it is of God. The apostle speaks not indefinitely, 'The higher powers are of God,' but he speaks universally and exclusively, There is no power, be it what it will, but is of God. Though the manner of getting into power by fraud and force may be unlawful, and of man; yet the power and office itself is of God; and that not only by permission, for so is sin and the devil's power, but by special ordination;[1] the powers that be are ordained of God, for the greater manifestation of his wisdom, power, justice, and goodness. We must therefore shew all due respect and reverence to magistrates as magistrates, be they never so vile; for though in respect of their wickedness their persons may deserve contempt, yet their calling is honourable. There is a ray and sparkle of God's sovereignty and image in authority; and in that respect, whatever the persons are, they must be honoured. We should not be too scrupulous in inquiring how men come to their power, but rather study how we may walk wisely, winningly, and religiously towards such as are in power.

Obs. 5. God is the Most High. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Most High over all the earth, and to be exalted above all gods, Ps. lxxxvi. 8, xcvi. 4, and cxiii. 4. This title of Most High is often given to God, Gen. xiv. 18, 22; Ps. vii. 17, and xlvi. 4; Luke i. 32, 35, vi. 35, and viii. 28; Acts xvi. 17; Heb. vii. 1, and is one of those ten names which are attributed to God,[2] to set forth his transcendent and surpassing excellency, majesty, power, and authority over and above all.[3] Though others be high, yet there is a higher than they, Eccles. v. 8, even the high and lofty One, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and judgeth those that are high, Job xxi. 22; Ps. cxiii. 5; Isa. xxxiii. 5. No towers, pillars, places, or persons so high, but he can bring them down.[4] It is this Most High that ruleth the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whom he pleaseth, Dan. iv. 32, and v. 18. He is the great Jehovah, the Lord paramount of heaven and earth, there is none to be compared to him: Ps. cxxxv. 15, 'I know that

[1] Emphasi non caret, cum non dicit, omnis potestas est a Deo, sed non est potestas nisi a Deo, *q.d.*, nulla uspiam potest inter homines esse potestas quæ sit aliunde quam a Deo. 2. Non simpliciter dicit a Deo sunt, sed ordinatæ sunt a Deo; alia est eorum conditio quæ permittuntur, alia eorum quæ ordinantur ac disponuntur. *Musculus in Rom.* xiii. 1, 2. Solent plerique nimis scrupulose inquirere quo quisque jure adeptus sit imperium; sed hoc solo contentos esse decet, quod videmus eos præsidere.—*Calvin in* 1 *Pet.* ii. 13.

[2] *Vide* D. Gouge's Arrows, p. 317.

[3] Ad denotandam summam Dei gloriam, potentiam et majestatem; Deus dicitur altissimus.

[4] See more in Mr Gataker's Ser. on Ps. lxxxii. 7, p. 98–100.

the Lord is great, and our Lord is above all gods;' whether they be so deputed, as magistrates; or reputed, as idols. He is not only great, but greatness itself; not only high, but the Most High, beyond the tongue's expression, or the heart's imagination. It is infinite, and so unspeakable; we may as soon measure the sea with a spoon, or put it in a bushel, as comprehend with our shallow understandings his excellent greatness; it is therefore called unsearchable: Ps. cxlv. 3, 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.' All the power, perfection, beauty, and excellency that is dispersed through the whole world, that and ten thousand times more is in the Lord by way of eminency and transcendency. All the glory that is in angels, men, and all creatures, compared to his, is but as a drop to the sea, a shadow to the substance, or one little sand to a great mountain; heaven, earth, and sea compared to him are *parum nihil*, mere nothing. In Isa. xl. 12, 15–17 we have a most lively expression of the power of God: 'Who hath measured the water in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance,' &c. He doth these great things with ease, as if it were but spanning, measuring, weighing, &c. Hence it is that greatness is truly and properly ascribed to God alone.[1] He only is great, Deut. xxxii. 3; 2 Sam. vii. 22; Ps. xcvi. 4, xcix. 2, 3, and cxlv. 3; Titus ii. 13. Excellent is that doxology of David, 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted above all. Both riches and honour come of thee,' &c. He is mighty in power; there is no opposing him, Ps. cxlvii. 5: mighty in counsel; there is no out-witting him, Jer. xxxii. 13: mighty in working; there is no out-doing him, Deut. xxxii. 4: and great in judgment; there is no withstanding him, Exod. vii. 4.

1. Then trust in this great God; what though thou have great enemies, great tentations within and without? yet remember thou hast the great God to assist thee. A weak creature when backed by a stronger will venture on a stronger than itself. When the prophet Micaiah saw two kings sitting on their thrones, he was not afraid, because he saw a greater than they, 1 Kings xxii. 10, 19. Moses by an eye of faith beheld him who was invisible, and therefore did not fear the wrath of the king,[2] Heb. xi. 27. Did we

[1] Nihil magnum nisi Deus magnus.

[2] In te stas et non stas.—*Aug.*

stand by our own strength, we might well fear; but our help standeth in the name of the Lord, Ps. cxxiv. 8. This upheld Abraham in his straits; he doubted not, because God who had promised was able to perform, Rom. iv. 18; and this upheld Paul; 'I know whom I have believed, and that he is faithful and able to keep what I have committed to him,' 2 Tim. i. 12. Get a holy magnanimity of spirit; God loves to do great things for those that greatly trust in him, as we see in those three worthies, who were giants rather than children,[1] Dan. iii. Oppose this mighty God to all the might that comes against thee. Whilst others boast of their friends, navies, confederates, strongholds, &c., do thou make thy boast of God, and say, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?' 'There is none amongst the gods to be compared to him,' Ps. xxvii. 1–3, and lxxxvi. 8. When Charles V. in a challenge to the king of France commanded his herald to proclaim all his titles, Charles, emperor of such a place, king of such a place, duke of such a place, &c., bids defiance to the king of France; the king of France on the other side bids his herald proclaim no more but this, The king of France, the king of France, the king of France bids defiance to Charles the emperor of Germany: intimating that one kingdom of France was of more worth than all those empty titles of the emperor. So when men cry riches, pleasures, friends, promotion, &c., do thou cry, The Lord Most High is my portion,[2] the Lord is my portion; he that hath him hath all; he hath the fountain, the mine, the ocean, and he cannot want, Ps. xxiii. 1. Get therefore propriety and interest in him; for what comfort is it to hear of so high and great a God, if he be not ours? That word *my* is a little word, but there is abundance of divinity and sweetness in it, when with Thomas we can truly say, 'My Lord and my God.' Let us by faith hide ourselves under the wings of this most high protector, and abide under the shadow of this almighty *shadai,* and there sing care and fear away, Ps. xci. 1. In all our distresses let us cry unto God Most High, and he will hear and help us, Ps. lvii. 2.

2. In the church's distress let us comfort ourselves in the Most High God. The church, whilst it is in this world, meets with mountains of opposition; but the comfort is, they shall all become a plain before God's Zerubbabels, Zech. iv. 7. The church's enemies in their own conceits are as great mountains unpassable, unaccessible; they proudly overlook the people of God, but God contemns

[1] Animo magno nihil est magnum.

[2] Habet omnia, quia habet habentem omnia.

these contemners of his people, Ps. ii. 1–6; Isa. viii. 9, 10; and though they think themselves mountains, and their flatterers call them so, and God's own people looking upon them through the spectacles of fear and unbelief, think them such, yet God here, by way of contempt, asketh them, Who art thou? *q.d*, Thou lookest high and haughty like a mountain, but thou shalt become a mole-hill, a nothing, before me and my people. I will overthrow those mountains in my wrath, Job ix. 5. I will but touch them and they shall vanish, Ps. cxliv. 5; Isa. ii. 11, 12, 14; and though my people be but as so many despicable worms, yet I will make them to thresh mountains, Isa. xli. 44. Let us not, then, fear, nor be despondent; that God which hath brought us over the mountains of popery, and the mountains of prelacy; that God will, in his due time, bring us over the mountains of heresy, libertinism, and independency, &c.

Obj. But how can this be? We see no visible means to effect this.

Ans. God is a free agent, and though he hath tied us to means, yet himself is tied to none. He hath promised to create deliverance for his people, Isa. iv. 5, and lxv. 18: now *Creatio fit*, 1. *Ex nihilo;* 2. *In instanti;* 3. *Irresistibiliter.* 1. When the Lord created the world, he made it out of no pre-existing matter; so though we see no means how he should deliver his people, yet he being almighty, can without means, by weak means, yea, by contrary means, deliver them. 2. He can do it instantly; when the hearts of his people are prepared for reformation and deliverance, the work shall be done suddenly, 2 Chron. xxix. 36. 3. It shall be done irresistibly. The work of reformation it is the Lord's, and it shall prosper in despite of all its enemies, Hag. ii. 4. It is of God, and it shall stand, Acts v. 38, 39. Let us therefore encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. What though giants, sons of Anak, the great Zanzummims, the high and mighty of the earth, rise against the church; yet there is a higher than they, who will break them with a rod of iron; yea, if the nations, all nations should come against it, yet all their power, compared with God's power, is *parum nihil;* an empty nothing, as the prophet excellently, Isa. xl. 15. Behold the nations are counted of him as a drop that hangeth on the side of a full bucket, or that stayeth behind when the water is poured out, yet doth not diminish the measure; or like the small dust of the balance, which remains in the balance when powder or beaten spice hath been weighed in it, which is easily blown away with a little puff of wind. All the men in the world, compared with this high and

holy One, are vanity, lighter than vanity, nothing; yea, less than nothing, Ps. lxii. 20. Many are afraid of displeasing great men. Let the great ones of the world take heed of offending this great God, or of injuring his people; for God is not only absolutely and essentially great in himself, but he is also relatively and declaratively so to his people. The great God loves to shew his greatness on their behalf. As his greatness is superlative to all other greatness, whether they be human powers or imaginary deities; so of his goodness he will extend it to the protection and preservation of his people, and for the confusion of their enemies.

3. Admire the great condescension of this great God towards man. Though he be the Most High, yet he dwells in the lowest hearts, Isa. lvii. 15. He hath but two thrones, the highest heavens, and the lowest heart. He overlooks the frame of heaven and earth to look on such, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2; nor doth he look upon them with a bare look of intuition, but with a look of approbation and delight. Barely to look on man is a condescension: Ps. cxiii. 6, 'He humbleth himself to behold the things on earth.' But to take up his dwelling with man, that is no less an act of mercy than of wonder.

4. Serve this great God with fear and reverence. The greater the person, the greater must our fear be, Mal. i. 14. We cannot worship him rightly, unless we worship him reverently, Ps. ii. 12; Heb. xii. 29. He looks to be greatly feared in the assembly of his saints. We should always come with self-abhorrency into his presence, out of a sense of God's exceeding greatness, and our own exceeding baseness, Job xlii. 5, 6; Eccles. v. 1, 2. And if the angels stand before him with reverence, covering their faces; and Moses quaked and feared exceedingly when he was with God in the mount, Heb. xii. 21; yea, and the very inanimate creatures tremble before him, the mountains melt, the hills quake, and the rocks rend, Nahum i. 3–7, with what soul-abasement ought we to come into his presence, who have so many ways provoked him?

5. Turn servants to him. You cannot serve a better master: the greater the prince, the more noble the service. Prefer his service before all the crowns and kingdoms of the world. Spend thyself and all thou hast for his honour. There is none gives better wages than he.

6. Admire and adore him for his excellent greatness. The Holy Ghost oft calls on us to this duty, Ps. xcv. 2, 3, and xcvi. 4. Praise must wait for him in Zion, Ps. lxv. 1, or praise is silent for thee.[1]

[1] Tibi Domine silentium est laus.

A silent admiration of his greatness, and a humble confessing of our inability to express his praise, is the greatest praise we can give him.

7. Beware of offending this high and holy One. Better have all the world against thee, than God against thee. He is the best friend, and the saddest foe. As he is great, and greatly to be praised, so he is great, and greatly to be feared. He is a consuming fire; there is no abiding when he is angry. The Lord Most High is terrible, and it is dangerous provoking him, Ps. xlvii. 2, and lxxviii. 56.

Obs. 6. Magistrates are the sons of the Most High. If they are true believers, then they are his adopted sons; but if wicked, yet in respect of their office, they are nuncupative and nominal sons. Thus God is pleased to style them: 1. To mind them of their duty to him; 2. To mind us of our duty to them.

1. He calls them sons, to the end they might walk worthy of such a father, by loving, fearing, serving, and obeying him:[1] Mal. i. 6, 'A son honours his father, and a servant his master;' but God is not only a father and a master, but he is a king, a creator, a counsellor, a protector and assister of magistrates; and if one of these relations call for respect and love, what reverence and respect is due to that God in whom all these relations concentre and meet? Let such, then, improve the power which they have received from God unto his praise; uphold his worship, advance his sceptre, promote his interest, defend his people, pity his poor, do justice to all.[2] If you thus honour God, who hath honoured and exalted you, he will be a father and a friend to you; he will be a sun for consolation, and a shield for protection; he will be your God and guide unto death.

2. Doth God call you sons? then woe to them that call you Satans, and revile the rulers of God's people. It becomes us to honour those whom God honours. This shews what spirit leads the fifth-monarchy men, and their adherents, who have so grossly, and that in print, reviled the rulers of God's people.

Obj. But they are wicked men.

Ans. Be it so: yet if a wicked man be set in power by God for the sins of a people, even that wicked man must be honoured for his place; but if a godly man rule, he is to be honoured for his person. Some kind of honour is due to a magistrate as a

[1] Exemplata oportet conformari exemplari secundum rationem formæ. Things exemplified ought to resemble their sampler according to the reality of the form.—*Aquinas*, P. 1, Q. 18, art 4.

[2] See reasons why magistrates should honour God more than others in Mr Gataker's Ser. on Ps. lxxxii. 6, p. 76, 77.

magistrate, and God's vicegerent; but all kind of honour and subjection is due from all sorts of men to good rulers.

3. As magistrates are sons by office, so all believers are sons by adoption, which is a choicer privilege, John i. 12; Gal. iii. 26, and iv. 5, 6. So that now every true believer may say with David, 'The Lord is my shepherd;' yea, the Lord is my father, 'and I shall not want,' Ps. xxiii. 1. Thou art now sure of: 1. Dilection; 2. Direction; 3. Correction; 4. Protection; 5. Provision.

1. All the children of God are sure of dilection and love. Fathers have a natural affection to their children, and love them with a paternal love. How tender was David over Absalom, Touch not the young man Absalom; and when dead, how doth he take on: O Absalom, my son, my son, that I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son! If David were thus tender over a rebellious Absalom, how tender is God over his obedient children? and though thou hast many infirmities, yet God will pity thee, and spare thee as a man that spareth his son that serveth him, Ps. ciii. 13; Mal. iii. 16, 17.

2. Direction. Fathers will teach their children the way which they should go; so will the Lord do his, Ps. xxv. 9. It is a part of the new covenant, that all believers shall be taught of God. In all their doubts his Spirit shall be as a voice behind them, saying, This is the way.

3. Correction. Fathers that love their children will correct them. God loves his, and therefore he chastiseth them for their profit, Heb. xii. 10; Rev. iii. 19.

4. Protection. Fathers will defend their children, and God will defend his; he is their shield and buckler, Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Prov. ii. 7. In six troubles he will be with them, and in the seventh he will not leave them, Job v. 19, 20, 21, 22.

5. Provision. Fathers will provide for their children; and if earthly parents, who have but a drop of goodness, will give good things to their children, how much more will God give his Spirit to them that ask it? The lions natural, the lions metaphorical, may lack and suffer hunger; but such as fear the Lord shall lack nothing that may be for their good. God hath prepared an inheritance for them, Luke xii. 32, he hath given them his Son, and with him he hath given them all things, Rom. viii. 32.

Ver. 7. *Obs.* 1. Men in high places are apt to have high conceits of themselves. It is a hard thing to be in honour without tumour and swelling thoughts. The Lord, who knows our frame better than we ourselves, foresaw this; and therefore in the precedent

verse having told them of their dignity, in this verse he tells them of their misery and mortality; that they might not have the least time to be puffed up with pride and high conceits of their high places, he presently adds a humbling and abasing *but*—but ye shall die; what is that? Why, synecdochically it includes all those miseries which are antecedent to death, as sickness, weakness, pains, aches, old age, and death, and also subsequent miseries after death; then must great ones as well as others be brought to judgment, stand at God's bar and give an account as well as the poorest son of Adam. Those that now judge others, must shortly be judged themselves.

Obs. 2. Magistrates are mortal as well as others; or, those who live like gods, yet must die like men. The most potent emperor must take his leave of this life as well as the poorest beggar. No titles of honour, nor places of honour, can privilege men from the grave. Their divine constitution cannot free them from their native condition; princes and great men must fall, and that in Israel, 2 Sam. iii. 38.[1] The truth of this is seen by daily experience. It is so decreed in the high court of heaven; the statute is universal, and admits of no exception; 'it is appointed for men'—for all men, the indefinite is equivalent to a universal—'once to die,' Heb. ix. 27. Death is the great leveller of all the world, it makes all equal.[2] Irus and Crœsus, Dives and Lazarus, princes and peasants, cannot be known asunder in the grave. As at a game of chess, when it is ended, not only pawns, but kings, queens, knights, are tumbled into the bag together;[3] so when the race of this life is finished, noble as well as ignoble are tumbled into their graves together: hence death is called the way of all the earth, because all flesh on earth must go that way, Josh. xxiii. 14. It is the greatest road in all the world, it is never without many travellers of all sorts, ranks, and degrees. The grave is the house appointed for all the living, Job xxx. 23; Eccles. viii. 8; both the small and the great are there, even kings and counsellors, Job iii. 13, 14, 19. Death is *pambasileus*, a truly catholic universal king; it is not only *rex terrorum*, the king of fears, but *rex terrarum*, an oecumenical king, that spares no age, sex, nation, or condition. In Golgotha are skulls of all sorts and sizes: hence it is that the prophet Isaiah must not only say, but cry, so as all may hear, for most

[1] See Mr Levisy his Ser. on that text, p. 207, &c.

[2] Mors sceptra ligonibus æquat.—*Horat.*

[3] Æquales omnes nascimur; et imperatores et pauperes, æqualiter morimur.—*Hieron.*

men are deaf on this ear, that not only some, but all flesh is grass, Isa. xl. 6, 7, *i.e.*, it is a feeble, empty, fading thing; it withers while we touch it, yea, and the glory of it, *i.e.*, such as have more glory bestowed on them than others, are but as fading flowers; the scythe of death knows no difference, but mows down both alike, Ps. cii. 11, and ciii. 15, 16; Job xiv. 2; 1 Pet. i. 24; James i. 10, 11. It passeth upon all men, Rom. v. 12; he doth not say, death may pass, or shall pass, but it hath passed over all men; for though it hath not *ipso facto* as yet slain all, yet death is as certain as if it were already executed upon all.

2. All are sinners, even great men as well as poor, and therefore all must die; for sin brought death into the world, Rom. v. 12, and vi. 22, 23.

3. We are all made of fading materials. Great men dwell in houses of clay, and their foundation is dust as well as others,[1] Job iv. 19; Gen. iii. 19, and xviii. 27. We are dust originally and finally; even kings, that are gods on earth, are but gods of earth, or rather clods of earth: hence the earth is called his by a special propriety, Ps. cxlvi. 4; man, *i.e.*, princely men, for of such he there speaks, returns unto his dust; he doth not say, they go to their cities, castles, kingdoms, these are now another's; but he goes to his tomb, to his dust and ashes, that is the proper possession of kings.

4. They are subject to the like or greater diseases, calamities, and judgments of poisoning, stabbing, stifling, surfeiting, &c., than other men.[2]

5. As inferior persons must die, and so make way for the arising of others, so also must superiors. God hath others to arise and succeed them in their places, that his power and glory may be seen in them also. Hence Saul dies that David may succeed him. Moses dies that Joshua may appear. Daniel dies, and then Haggai and Zechariah arise; and when John Baptist died, then Christ appeared.

6. None of those prerogatives and privileges which great men enjoy can privilege them from the arrest of death. It is not, 1. Riches; 2. Strength; 3. Parts, Policy; 4. Dignity; 5. Friends; 6. Piety.

1. Their riches cannot save them from the grave, they avail not in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4; Ezek. vii. 19; Zeph. i. 18: the rich man died as well as Lazarus, Luke xii. 20, and xvi. 22; those

[1] As there is *terra quam terimus, terra quam quærimus, et terra quam gerimus;* so there is *terra quæ erimus.*

[2] Nulla aconita bibuntur fictilibus.—*Juven.*

that spend their days in wealth, yet in a moment go down to the grave, Job xxi. 13, 32. Rich men are apt to sing a requiem to their souls, and dream of living here many years: this is called folly, Luke xii. 19, 20, and is notably confuted, Ps. xlix. 6–20. Princes that had gold, and filled their houses with silver, yet must to their graves as well as the poor, Job iii. 15. Death will not be bribed: we have a notable instance for this in the king of Tyrus, who abounded with all riches, jewels, merchandise, and lived in Eden, the garden of God; he lived as it were in paradise, insomuch that in his own conceit he was a god for power, wisdom, and majesty; but God made him quickly to know that he was a weak man, and therefore he cut him off by a violent death in his own city, Ezek. xxviii. 2–14.

2. Not strength. Samson was strong, yet death was too strong for him. Alexander and Cæsar, which conquered kingdoms, yet could not conquer death. Nero, Caligula, Domitian, Titus, &c., the terrors of their time, yet were all conquered by the king of terrors. Men of power have no power over death, Eccles. viii. 8; the captain, the mighty man, and the man of war, are all in the grave, Isa. iii. 2, 3.

3. Parts, policy, learning, wisdom cannot preserve any from the grave. Solomon the wisest of men is dead, and daily experience shews that wise men die as well as fools, Ps. xlix. 10; Eccles. ii. 16; the judge, the prudent, the prophet, the counsellor, and the eloquent orator, are all swept away by death, Isa. iii. 2, 3. Death is *nomen indeclinabile;* the greatest clerks have not been able to decline it.

4. No dignity nor honour can stave off death. Herod in the midst of his pomp was smitten dead, and devoured by vermin. Let a man be never so high in honour, yet he must die and perish, Ps. xlix. 20; Job xxi. 28, 32; such as are the staff and stay of a state, even the ancient and the honourable, yet are taken away by death,[1] Isa. iii. 2, 3.

5. Friends cannot save or shelter you from this arrest; be they never so great or good, in them is no help; they cannot help themselves, much less others, Ps. cxlvi. 3.

6. Not piety. If anything in the world could save a man from the grave, it is this: and yet we see Moses, a pious, meek, learned, self-denying servant of God, dies, Deut. xxxiv. 5. Moses, the servant of the Lord, died. David, a wise man and excellent musician,

[1] See instances for this in that elaborate Tract of Holy Love by Fonseca, chap. xxvii.

a valiant soldier, a man after God's own heart, and one that fulfilled all his will, and yet, after he had served the will of God in his generation, he fell asleep, Acts xiii. 22, 36; the holy prophets do not live for ever, Zech. i. 5, but even the righteous themselves do perish,[1] Isa. lvii. 1. Christ doth not free his from death, but from the sting of death; that which is penal is taken away; he hath made that which in itself is a curse, to become a blessing; of a poison, he hath made a medicine; and of a punishment, an advantage. So that what Agag spake vauntingly, we may speak truly, the bitterness of death is past, Hosea xiii. 14.

Use 1. Fear not great men when they are great oppressors; for there is a greater than they who will bring them to judgment; how oft doth the Lord blame his people for fearing such as must die, and then all their fury ceaseth, Isa. li. 12, 13.

2. Trust not in them. Though they be never so great, yet they must die, and then all thy projects perish. If a man might trust in any man, it is in princes, for they can do more for us than ordinary men; and yet we are expressly forbidden trusting in them, Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4, 'Trust not in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.' Where you may see, 1. They cannot help you. 2. If they could, yet they must die, and then all their projects and purposes for themselves or for thee perish and come to nought: and therefore trust not in them, nor in any of the sons of men; for they are vain, yea, vanity, yea, lighter than vanity: nothing, yea, if it be possible, less than nothing, Ps. lxii. 9. If you will trust in any, trust in the Almighty, for he never dies, Ps. xviii. 16. The prophets, they die: and our fathers do not live for ever. Ay, but the God of the prophets, and the God of our fathers, lives for ever, Ps. xc. 1. When father and mother forsake thee, he will take thee up; when all thy friends are dead, yet he is an ever-living and an ever-loving friend, who will guide thee with his counsel till he bring thee to glory.

3. This must teach great men who are in high places, oft to think on death and judgment. God no sooner tells us of their majesty, but he presently adds their mortality, to keep them humble in the midst of all their creature comforts. The sight of this death's-head will damp all carnal delights; and this verse, well thought on, would make us look with a mortified eye on all earthly enjoyments. Mortality is a very fit meditation for magistrates. Francis Borgia, a Spanish courtier, having been at the

[1] Tollitur mors, non ne sit, sed ne obsit.

funeral of the empress, and considering how little a grave had devoured all earthly greatness, *Totus mutatus est in melius;* he began to reform his life, and became another man;[1] whereupon he told his friends, *Augustæ mors mihi vitam attulit*, the death of the empress hath brought me to life. A serious consideration of death will take off the scales from our eyes, and make us see the vanity of all earthly glory, how short and transitory it is; and, therefore, when you find your hearts begin to be lifted up with the gay feathers of honour, wit, wealth, beauty, or any other fading excellency, then cast your eyes upon the black feet of your mortality, and it will humble you. It is said of Hoshea the king of Samaria, that he should 'vanish like a bubble, the foam and froth of water,' Hosea x. 7. We know bubbles do soon arise, and as soon vanish; and as one bubble ariseth after another till all are gone, so it is here. How many popes enjoyed not their pomp a year![2] Some were cut off at eleven months, some are at ten, others at nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one month; yea, some enjoyed the chair not months but days: Leo the eleventh sat pope but twenty-seven days, Pius III. twenty-six days, another twenty-three, another twenty, yea, Pope Urbana VII. was pope but seven days, and Pope Stephen II. but four days. Oh! the madness of these popes, many of which gave their souls to the devil for fading, flying, lying vanities! As Philip, king of Macedon, commanded his page every morning when he arose to cry *Philippe, memento te esse mortalem;* remember, O king, thou art but a mortal man; so say I, *Memento te esse bullam;* remember, O ye great ones of the world, that you are but bubbles which soon vanish. I have read of St Austin,[3] that when he was at Rome and saw the rotten carcass of Cæsar in his sepulchre, he brake forth into this pathetical exclamation, 'Where, oh where is the famous body of Cæsar? where are his riches and delights? where are his troops of lords and barons? where are his numerous armies, his horses, and his hounds, his ivory bed, his arras hangings, his imperial throne, his change of raiments, his curious hair, his comely face? where, oh where is he with all his pomp, that was once the terror of the world?' The answer was; 'All these left him when his breath left him, they left him captive in the grave,' &c. Commendable, therefore, was the practice of Maximilian the

[1] V. Ribaden. de Vit. Borgiæ.

[2] V. Mendoza in i. Reg. iv. Numb. 22, Sec. 3; and 1, Reg. x. Numb. 27. Annot. 6, p. 135. *ubi plura.*

[3] Aug. Serm. 48, ad fratres in eremo.

Emperor, who some years before his death commanded his coffin to be carried about with him, that by the sight of it he might be put in mind of his mortality,[1] and of the account he must shortly give of the empire, and might be quickened in the meantime to a more diligent discharge of his duty. This will be a corrosive to sin, and a curb to keep you from exorbitant courses. Great men many times are great tyrants; they make their lusts their law, and as the Donatists conceited that they could not err (though few erred more,)[2] so there are State-Donatists that cry *Quod statuimus justum est, stat per ratione voluntas.* Whatever they decree must pass for just, though it be never so unjust. These forget their last ends, as Jerusalem did before her ruin,[3] Lam. i. 9. They remember not that they who sit on the bench now must shortly come to the bar.

2. Let it be a spur to duty: our time is short, our work is great, our reward unspeakable. Be active for God; do much in a short time; serve not nor seek yourselves, but serve God in your generation, as David did, Acts xiii. 36. As you have your places, your power, your gifts, your time and talents from God, so improve them all unto his praise. Live the life of the righteous, and you shall die their deaths. Walk in their way, and you shall attain their end.[4] Be Israelites indeed in whom there is no reigning guile, and then when you come to die, you may comfortably say with Nehemiah and Hezekiah, 'Remember me, O my God, for good, and remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight,' Isa. xxxviii. 3. Make it your daily exercise to keep a conscience void of offence[5] towards God and man, and then when you come to die, this will be your rejoicing, even the testimony of your consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity you have had your conversation in the world.

Obs. 3. Great men must certainly die, as well as other ordinary men. But doth any one question this? It would seem so, and therefore the Lord, who knows our hearts better than we know ourselves, hath set a 'verily' on it. The pomp, prosperity, peace, and pleasures of great men do so blind and harden them, that they cannot a while to think on death, or, if they do, it is only slightly

[1] Tu mortem ut nunquam timeas, semper cogita.

[2] Quod volumus sanctum est.

[3] Nihil sic revocat homines a peccato sicut imminentis mortis cogitatio.—*Aug.*

[4] Non potest male mori qui bene vixit.—*Aug.*

[5] See the singular comfort of a good conscience at death and judgment, in Dyke on Conscience,' cap. 11. p. 190, &c.

and notionally; they do not realise death, and look on it as ready to arrest them; if they did, they would lead other lives than now they do. They are apt to put the evil day far from their soul, and therefore it is that they 'draw near to the seat of iniquity,' Amos vi. 3. They have made a covenant with death, and a bargain with hell; hence the Lord, to awaken them out of their vain dreams, speaks so assertively of death: Ps. xxxix. 5, 'Verily, every man in his best estate is altogether vanity, Selah.' The words are very emphatical;[1] man, every man, not only some of inferior rank, but superiors also; *Col Adam*, every son of Adam, and that not only in his low condition, but in the best and most prosperous condition; when in the height of his beauty and bravery, having all creature comforts about him, yea, even then, he is but vain, yea, vanity, and not only in some measure vain, but altogether vanity. Man at his best is the very universe of vanity;[2] and to put this further out of doubt, the Holy Ghost puts a double seal to it, one at the beginning of the sentence, and another at the end. 'Verily' lets it in, and 'Selah' shuts it up. Implying that it is no doubtful or probable thing, but a most certain truth.

Obs. 4. Death is a fall. It is so to all, they fall from the society of men to the company of worms; at death we fall from everything save God and godliness; our good works will follow us to heaven; 'The comfort of them will endure for ever,' Rev. xiv. 13; 1 John ii. 17.

2. Yet some shall fall more stairs and storeys than others, as princes, rulers, and the grandees of the world. The higher your standing is whilst you live, the lower ye fall when ye die; and therefore, when Abner was slain, it is said, 'A prince and a great man was fallen in Israel,' 2 Sam. iii. 38, 39. Such fall from their richest treasures, delightfullest pleasures, stately mansions, dear relations, yea, from whatsoever is called the good of this world; Job vii. 7, 'Your eyes shall no more see good,' you must now bid farewell to all your creature delights; as you brought nothing into the world, so you shall carry nothing out.

3. Some yet fall lower than others, as tyrants and wicked men who fall from earth to hell; Ps. ix. 17, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God;' he casts down the mighty from their seats in fury. Few tyrants but come

[1] Hæc omnia emphatice dicta et observanda esse innuit, ut ostendat nihil esse in studiis mortalium, in vita ipsa mortalium, quorumcunque, qualecunque, quantumcunque, quod non sit vanum.—*Musculus.*

[2] *Col Adam col hebel.* Universa vanitas omnis homo.

to violent deaths and miserable ends,[1] as we see in Zachariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah, who in a short time were cut off by violent deaths, Hosea vii. 7 and 10. If the rulers of God's people will be like the rulers of the world in pride and oppression, they must expect to be like them in punishment, and to fall as those tyrannical heathen princes have done before them; for God is no respecter of persons or privileges, but is the same in all ages to the same sinners.

Ver. 8. *Arise, O God, judge thou the earth, for thou shalt inherit all nations.*

In the first verse we had the psalmist's preface; in this last verse we have his petitory conclusion. The psalmist seeing the gross stupidity of the judges of those times, how no warnings would work upon them, no complaints stir them, no sense of their mortality affect them; by a sudden apostrophe he turns himself to God, and betakes himself to his prayers. 'Arise, O God, judge thou the earth.' Before he spake in the person of God to those rulers; he leaves them now as desperate and past cure, and betakes himself to God. 'Arise, O God.' Where we have, 1. The substance of his suit or matter of his prayer, viz., that God would arise and judge the earth. 2. A reason drawn from the dominion and universal sovereignty of God over all the world.[2] 'For thou inheritest all nations.'

'Arise,' *q.d.* Hitherto, O Lord, thou hast sate still and concealed thy power, though justice hath been turned into wormwood, and righteousness into hemlock;[3] now therefore arise, O Lord, and take the throne, relieve the oppressed, right the wronged, and set all things in order which have been so long in confusion.[4] This word 'arise' by an anthropopathy is given to God, when he exerts and puts forth his power (which seemed to sleep and lie dormant for a time, suffering his people to be afflicted whilst the wicked flourish) in punishing the wicked, and delivering his people out of trouble. So the word is used, Num. x. 35; Job xxxi. 14; Ps. xliv. 23, 24, lix. 5, lxviii. 1, and lxxvi. 8, 9; Zech. ii. 13.

'O God,' *Elohim, i.e.* O thou Creator, Governor, Prince, and Judge of all the world (so much the word implies,) O thou abso-

[1] See more before on verse 1, obs. 5.

[2] Addit rationem a proprio Dei jure.—*Moller.*

[3] Dicitur sedere Deus quando dissimulat suam potentiam neque exercet munus judicis.— *Vatablus.*

[4] *Kumah,* surge, *i.e.,* ad agendum te accinge, et contra hostes insurge.

lute, universal, supreme, and mighty Judge, do thou now arise and judge these unrighteous judges of the world.

'Judge thou the earth,'[1] *i.e.*, the men of the earth; *q.d.*, since justice is perished from the earth, and men are so corrupt and careless that they will not do justice,[2] but abuse their power; do thou therefore, O Lord, take the power into thine own hand, and execute justice for the oppressed and the needy; 'For thou dost inherit,' or, 'thou dost possess all nations,' *q.d.*, all nations of the world, and amongst the rest these oppressed ones, are thine by a true right and inheritance;[3] it concerns thee therefore to take notice of them, and to right them in their wrongs, and not to suffer unrighteous judges to oppress and slay them at their pleasure, Ps. lxxiv. 21. Or, 'Thou shalt inherit, or thou shalt possess all nations,'[4] *q.d.*, thou, whether they will or no, shalt have power over Jews and Gentiles,[5] for thou art Lord paramount, and the true possessor of all nations, they are all within thy jurisdiction and dominion; and therefore, seeing that office belongs to thee, take it into thine own hand and do justice for thy people: let no tyrant take thy right and authority from thee, for thou dost, and for ever shalt possess, as thy proper peculiar, all nations whatsoever.

Quest. But how comes the world to be called God's inheritance, when the church of God is frequently called his portion and his inheritance? Deut. xxxii. 9; Ps. cxxxv. 4; Isa. xix. 25; Mal. iii. 17.

Ans. The answer is easy. 1. All the world is God's inheritance by right of creation and perpetual preservation; but his church is his by right of redemption and peculiar appropriation to himself. It is his portion and peculiar treasure above all people; he looks upon all the world but as lumber, dross, and refuse, in comparison of his people, Ps. cxix. 119. They are his jewels, his Segullah,[6] his select portion, and rich treasure which he values at the highest rate.

Some would make this verse a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ, when all nations shall be subdued to him, and be given him for his inheritance, according to that Ps. ii. 8; Heb. i. 2; Rev. xi.

[1] Meton. subjecti.

[2] Vindica probos hujus terræ incolas ab oppressione judicum.—*Piscator.*

[3] Hæreditare est dominium in gentes jure obtinere.

[4] *Tinchal*, possidebis, hæreditabis.

[5] *Goiim* sæpe dicitur de gentibus infidelibus et incredulis.

[6] Ecclesia vocatur hæreditas Dei et possessio ejus, quia Deo dulcis et grata est, sicut unicuique solet esse dulcis et jucunda hæreditas quam possidet.—*Ravanella.* See more of the word Segullah in Mr Bell on the Covenant, p. 103.

15. But the prophet speaks not here of Christ, or of the last judgment, but of the general providence of God, whereby he governs the kingdoms of the world with the sceptre of righteousness, Gen. xviii. 25, Eccles. iii. 17; defending the good, punishing the bad; preserving laws, public peace, justice, and order; and though he hath committed the custody of these to magistrates, who are his deputies, yet he himself is the chief judge; and when they neglect their duty then he appears. The sum of all is this—O Lord, since the iniquity of ungodly magistrates is so exceeding great, not only amongst thy own people, but even through the whole world, righteousness is fled, and justice cannot be found, the righteous are debased, the unrighteous exalted, the nocent are countenanced, and the innocent condemned; the rich are favoured, and the afflicted trod under foot; therefore do thou, Lord, arise, bring down the proud, punish the nocent, set free the innocent, rescue the poor and fatherless from the jaws of tyrannical ones, that all the earth may know that thou only art Lord and supreme judge of all the world.

Obs. 1. God sometimes seems to sleep when his people are in trouble. He seems to be careless, and let all run into confusion, as we have seen in this psalm. Not that God doth indeed sleep or disregard the afflictions of his people, for he that keepeth his Israel doth not so much as slumber, much less sleep, Ps. cxxi. 4, 5. He hath a special eye upon his people for good, he protects them so that the sun shall not hurt them by day, nor the moon by night, *i.e.*, no time, nothing shall hurt them, neither sun nor moon, neither heat nor cold. 2. No part of them shall be hurt, thy soul shall be preserved; thy going out and coming in shall be guided and guarded; these include the whole person of man, with all his just undertakings and affairs. Thus are they kept who have the Lord for their keeper; and as if this were not sufficient, he adds, ver. 3, 'He will not suffer thy foot to be moved,' *i.e.*, he will not suffer thee or thine to be moved or violently cast down; the power of oppressors shall not prevail over thee, for the power of God sustains thee. Lest any should hurt his vineyard, he keeps it night and day, *i.e.*, at all times, Isa. xxvii. 3. So that, to speak properly, there is no passion in God, there is neither rest nor motion in him; but the Scripture speaks of him by an anthropopathy, according to our apprehension. Thus the Lord is said sometimes to be slack, slow, and delay his coming; and then by our prayers we must quicken him: Ps. xl. 17, 'Make no long tarrying, O my God;' Ps. lxxiv., 'How long, Lord, how long wilt thou forget thy people?' Some-

times he seems to forget his church, and then his people must put him in remembrance: Isa. lxii. 7, 'Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers give him no rest.' Sometimes he seems to sleep, and then he expects that his people by their prayers should awaken him, as in the text, 'Arise, Lord.' The Lord is a God of great patience and long-suffering; he bears long with the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, Rom. ix. 22. He bears so long with the wicked till they rage again, and insult, thinking that God approves of their wickedness, Ps. l. 21. He seemed to sleep at Israel's troubles 430 years; but at last Pharaoh and his followers paid for all together in the sea. The Amorites, one would think, had been wicked enough to have been destroyed, for they were gross idolaters, grand oppressors, and notorious for lust, yet God bare some hundred of years with them, till they were ripe for ruin, Gen. xv. 16. Woe, then, to all the insulting, blasphemous enemies of God's people, though God seem for a time to sit still and sleep, letting the wicked oppress the righteous, who is better than he, Hab. i. 13. Yet as a man after sleep is refreshed, so God will arise like a giant refreshed with wine, and then his enemies shall be scattered, and those that hate him shall flee before him. As smoke is driven away by a mighty wind, though it seem black and formidable at first, yet it soon vanisheth; and the higher it ascends, the sooner it is scattered; and as wax melteth before the fire, so shall the wicked perish at the presence of God, Ps. lxviii. 1, 2. If the Lord do once arise, though his enemies be never so many or mighty, yet they are soon scattered. Let the Lord but look upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire, and it troubles and torments them, Exod. xiv. 24. Let not then God's people be despondent, though the Lord make them wait, yea, and wait long; though the vision be yet for an appointed time, yet at the end it shall speak comfort to those that patiently wait God's appointed time; and to assure you of this, the promise is doubled and trebled—it shall speak, it will come, it will surely come, it shall not lie, it will not tarry, Hab. ii. 3.

Quest. But when will the Lord arise for his people? The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and yet we are not saved.

Ans. Though God seldom comes at our time, yet he never fails of his own time; in his due time he will arise and save his people, only do not limit the Holy One of Israel to your time;[1] for when he sees it is most for his own glory, and his people's good, he will

[1] See ten seasons wherein God will arise for to help his people. Mr Case's Fast Sermon on Ps. lxviii. 1, 2, p. 21, preached 1644.

certainly arise: he only waits for a fit time to be gracious, Isa. xxx. 18. Yet for your better satisfaction, know that there are two seasons more especially wherein the Lord loves to appear for his people. 1. When the enemy is most high, begins to insult and blaspheme, crying, Where is now their God? he is asleep and cannot save; then their fall is near, Job xx. 5; Ps. xciv. 2, 6–23. Violent things last not long. 2. When God's people are most low, and all seems to make against them; when the enemy seems to carry all before him, and his people's strength is gone.[1] Now, now, now will I arise, saith God, Isa. xxxiii. 9, 10; Deut. xxxii. 36. *Cum duplicantur lateres, venit Moses.* God lets things come to the mount, and then he appears, Gen. xxii. 14. When his people lie as dry dead bones, in a hopeless, helpless, fatherless, forlorn condition, then God loves to appear for their help and succour, Ezek. xxxvii. 11; Exod. iii. 9; Ps. xii. 5, x. 12, and cii. 13; Hosea xiv. 3.

Obs. 2. When God's people are in distress, they must awaken God by their prayers; so doth the psalmist here: 'Arise, Lord, and judge the earth.' When they can have no help on earth, they must go to heaven. When the gods on earth will not right us, we must appeal to the God of heaven.[2] It is matter of singular comfort, that when tyrants cruelly oppress us, and we can have no relief below, yet we have a God to go to, who will vindicate our wrongs, and plead our cause against our enemies; but then we must awaken the Lord by fervent and importunate prayer. He seems to rest till he be disquieted by our prayers. Though he will help us, yet he will be sought of us to do it for us; hence his people so oft cry, 'Arise, Lord, and save thy people;' and, 'Awake, why sleepest thou?' Ps. iii. 7, vii. 6, ix. 19, xvii. 13, and lxviii. 1; Hab. i., ii., iii., *per totum.*

Only remember it is not every kind of prayer that will awaken God; but it must be, 1. The prayer of a righteous man, such as Moses, Job, Samuel, Daniel, who have both imputed and imparted righteousness. He must come in the raiment of Christ, his elder brother; there is no seeing God's face unless we bring him with us. Christ only is the way; there is no coming to the Father but by him. It was death under the law for any man to offer a sacrifice himself, though it were never so good; it must be put into the priest's hand, and he must offer it: 'Every sacrifice must be seasoned with salt,' Lev. ii. 13. Christ is that true salt which seasons both our persons and performances, and makes them accept-

[1] See more in my Comment. on 2 Tim. iii. 9, p. 182.

[2] Restat iter cælo.

able to his Father. Whatever we ask it must be in Christ's name, and not in our own, John xiv. 13, 14. The person must please, before the prayer can please. God had first respect to Abel, and then to his offering. The man must be good, or his prayer will never be heard. God hears not sinners, *i.e.*, impenitent sinners, which make a trade of sin, Ps. lxvi. 18; John ix. 31; there is no standing before God in our sins, Ezra ix. 15. An earthly prince will not traffic with rebels to his crown and dignity; to such God saith, 'What hast thou to do to take my name into thy mouth?' Ps. l. 16, 17; the prayers of a proud, profane libertine are an abomination to God, Prov. xv. 8, and xxviii. 9; he esteems them as swine's blood, or the offering a dog's neck in sacrifice, Isa. lxvi. 3; as the howling of a dog, Hosea vii. 14; or as lying and dissembling, Hosea xi. 12. 'The wicked compass me with lies when they cry, My Father, my Father.' And therefore, whenever we draw nigh to God in prayer, we must wash our hearts and our hands in innocency, lifting up pure hearts and pure hands: 'All that call on the name of the Lord must depart from iniquity,' 2 Tim. ii. 19. If we be such as do his commandments, then whatsoever we ask we shall receive, 1 John iii. 22. Hence the promises run to the righteous: Prov. x. 24, 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted;' Ps. cxlv. 19, 'He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him;' 1 Pet. iii. 12, Prayer is not a work of the wit, voice, memory, but of the heart: Ps. xxv. 1, Let the words be never so excellent, if they come not from the heart, it is but lip-labour, and lost labour; Isa. xxix. 30, To pray against pride, covetousness, passion, hypocrisy, &c., when the heart doth not hate those sins, nor will they part with them at any rate, but are angry with such as would separate between them and their lusts, what is this but to mock God to his face, and to give him occasion out of our own mouths to condemn us? If ever we desire that God should hear our prayers, we must first put iniquity far from our tabernacles, Job xxii. 23, 27. Our prayers must not come from feigned lips, Ps. xvii. 1. God is nigh to all that call upon him; but then they must call upon him in truth, Ps. cxlv. 18. It is the prayers of the upright that are God's delights, Prov. xv. 8. And as all sin, so three especially there are that mar men's prayers. The first is ignorance, when men have no sense of their own misery, nor of the majesty of that God they pray to; such cannot pray: Rom. x. 14, 'How shall they call on him of whom they have not heard?' or if they do, yet their prayers are abominable, Prov. xxviii. 9. 2. Pride, when men are full of self-confidence, and think

to be heard for their own merits and righteousness. God resists such proud pharisees; but it is the prayer of the destitute and the humble which he regards, Ps. x. 17, and cii. 16, 17. 3. Oppression and cruelty; the cry of these sins outcries their prayers so as they cannot be heard. Though such should pray, yea, and make many prayers, yet God will not hear, Isa. i. 15; how can he expect mercy from God, who shews none to his brother? Prov. xxii. 13, 'He that stops his ears at the cry of the poor, shall cry himself, and shall not be heard.

The question then will be, Whether a wicked man may pray?

Ans. Prayer considered as a duty binds all men;[1] for though wicked men cannot pray to God as to a father, yet they may as to a Creator. Prayer is good in itself, though by accident the wicked turn it into sin; now though, for want of faith, such prayers cannot please God, yet being good for matter, giving glory to God in sundry of his attributes, they may procure temporal blessings, or divert, for a time at least, some temporal judgments. The cry and moan of the creature oft moveth compassion in the Creator; he hears the cry of ravens and feeds them; and when the Israelites cried, though but hypocritically and in their trouble, yet he delivered them out of their distress, Ps. lxxviii. So Ahab and the Ninevites.

2. The prayer must be fervent; both these qualifications we have in one verse: James v. 16, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' We must awaken ourselves and cry aloud, if ever we would awaken God. So did the prophets: Isa. li. 9, 'Awake, O arm of the Lord; awake, awake, and put on strength.' There is no getting the blessing without striving; hence we are commanded to strive in prayer, Rom. xv. 30; Luke xviii. 4, 7; Rom. viii. 26; Col. iv. 2. It is only weeping, wrestling Jacobs, that become prevailing Israels, Hosea xii. 4. It is this seed of Jacob that never seek God's face in vain, Isa. lxv. 9. We must stir up ourselves that we may lay hold on God, and use argumentative prayer, as Moses did, Exod. xxxii. 11–13, and get a holy impudence, as that widow did,[2] Luke xi. 8. God loves to see us fervent, when it is for his own glory and his church's good. Tell him the cause is his; had it been our own cause we had been silent, but the cause is his. And the people that are oppressed are his, and

[1] The First Commandment of the moral law requiring prayer, it obligeth universally; besides, all men have need to pray always, in all things, even for the continuance of being, because they depend on this supreme being.—*Lawson.*

[2] Ἀναίδεια, impudentia, importunitas. See Mr Love on that text. Hæc vis grata Deo est.—*Tertul. lib. de Orat.*

the enemies are his; they blaspheme his name daily; it is their daily practice to vent blasphemies against him and his truth, and therefore beseech him to arise. When things be out of order in church and state, prayers and tears are our best weapons. It is not for private persons in such cases to rise tumultuously and revile their rulers; this will but exasperate, and not heal our distresses. God doth not say here, O ye afflicted and wronged, arise and slay your unrighteous rulers; no, but rather slay your sins, which provoke God to set them over you; and by prayer cry to him that he would arise and help you. Thus did the primitive Christians in Tertullian's time. So the people in Saul's time, when the Lord told them how cruelly he would deal with them, he tells them what they must do, 2 Sam. viii. 18; ye shall cry in that day, because of your king. They must not rise in rebellion against him, but they must cry unto God for aid. We must spread our case and our cause before him who is the judge of all the world, and who hath promised that the rod of the wicked shall not for ever lie on the lot of the righteous, Ps. cxxv. 3.

Caution. This is spoken against private persons taking up arms, and not against the inferior magistrates defending religion and the godly, when the superior is an enemy to both; of this judgment was the learned B. Bilson,[1] a man free enough from sedition or faction. I will not rashly pronounce, saith he, all that resist to be rebels; cases may fall out, even in Christian kingdoms, where the people may plead their right against the prince, and yet not be charged with rebellion, *e.g.*, If a prince go about to subject his kingdom to a foreign realm, or change the form of the commonwealth from impery to tyranny, or neglect the laws established by common consent of prince and people, to execute his own pleasure; in these, and other cases which might be named, if the nobles and the commons join together to defend their ancient and accustomed liberty, regiment, and laws, they may not well be accounted rebels. This, and more you may see in the place quoted, which excellently clears the justness of the late parliament wars. If any desire further satisfaction, he may see forty-four questions learnedly debated by Mr Rutherford in his Lex Rex, where he strongly asserts the lawfulness of defensive wars, and takes off all cavils that are brought to the contrary.[2] But whatever means be used, yet prayer may in no wise be neglected. It is it that blesseth all means, obtains all grace, and brings comfort to us in all our distress. So that a prayer-

[1] *Vide* Bilson's Philander, part 3, p. 279, &c.

[2] *Vide* Sharpius Cursus Theolog. Loc. de Magist., q. 2, p. 246, p. 2.

less man is a graceless man, useless man, cursed man, comfortless man.

1. A prayerless man is a graceless man. Grace is obtained by prayer; ask and have, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. A man of much prayer is usually a man of much grace, as we see in Daniel, and David, who was a man composed as it were of prayer; Ps. cix. 4, 'But I prayer,' or 'I give myself to prayer,' as being much in that work, and making it his only fence and refuge.[1] When Paul was converted, then he prays, Acts ix. 11. No doubt but he, being a strict pharisee, prayed before.[2] Ay but, says the Lord, go to him now; for behold he prays, *i.e.*, feelingly, fervently, and effectually; and not coldly, cursorily, and formally, as the pharisees did, which was no praying in God's esteem. Hence the spirit of grace and the spirit of supplication are joined together, Zech. xii. 10; and they are branded for irreligious atheists that call not upon God, Ps. xiv. 4. Let thy outside be never so civil or smooth, yet if thou be a prayerless man, certainly thou art a graceless man.

2. A useless man. Unfit for any service of God, a burden to the place he lives in; like Jeremiah's girdle, good for nothing, Jer. xiii. 7. As a praying saint is a public good, even the chariots and the horsemen of Israel; so a prayerless sot is a wen, a blemish, and burden to the church and state he lives in.

3. A cursed man. As food, rest, riches, labour, and all other things are sanctified to us by prayer; so, on the contrary, without prayer, all is cursed. You may rise early, and yet labour in vain, Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2, and get riches, but they will prove snares unto you.

4. A comfortless man. He hath no God to make his moan to in his troubles; and thence it is that wicked men, though in prosperity they be very high, yet in adversity none so despondent and amort as they.

But a man of prayer is still the same; in all his distresses he hath a God to go to, he hath hidden manna which the world knows not of. By this he gets strength from God either to overcome the temptation, or to undergo it patiently; it either removes the affliction, or else gets it sanctified. Prayer hath *Virtutem pacativam*, a settling and composing power; it stills the distempers of the soul, as sleep composeth the distempers of the body. Christ, by prayer, overcame his agony, and cheerfully goes forth to meet even those that sought to crucify him, Mat. xxvi. 44, 46. Hannah, that before

[1] *Vaani tephilla*, Ego autem oratio, *i.e.*, Vir orationis, et orationi deditus.

[2] Ficta pro infectis sunt.

was in bitterness of spirit, yet after she had been at prayer, her countenance was no more sad,[1] 1 Sam. i. 18. This made Luther call prayer the leeches of his cares, and Christ bids his pray that their joy may be full, John xvi. 24. As Moses, when he came from the mount, the people discerned that he had been with God, so a gracious soul never comes from God, but he carries away somewhat of God with him.[2] Prayer is a catholicon, it is a panacea, an universal remedy for every malady; if any be afflicted, internally or externally, let him pray, James v. 13. It is a special and eminent part of God's worship, in which we draw nigh to God, and he to us. By it we glorify him in all his attributes, in his truth, wisdom, mercy, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, &c. Hence it is oft put for the whole worship of God synecdochically, or virtually containing much of God's worship in it: So Mat. xxi. 13, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.'[3] Not that prayer should jostle out other ordinances, as some would have had it, but it is spoken by way of eminency, because prayer must accompany every ordinance. So oft in Scripture calling on God's name is put for the whole worship of God, Gen. iv. 26; Ps. l. 15; Rom. x. 12. This sets all our graces on work, as knowledge, faith, love, patience. This sets the crown on God's head, as Joab when he had taken Rabbah sent for David to take the glory of it; so prayer gives all the glory of what it hath or doth to God, and therefore it is that God loves to do such great things for his praying people; hence their prayers are called incense; there is no incense so pleasing to our smell, as the prayers of the faithful are to God, clxii. 2, and sweet odours, Rev. v. 8. Insomuch that God even begs their prayers: Cant. ii. 14, 'Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet.' This is a special preservative—1. Against sin. We live in an infectious world, and we had need to antidote ourselves against sin by prayer before we go forth of our doors. Watching and prayer is a special preservative against the power of temptations, Mat. xxvi. 41. 2. It is a special help against the concomitants of sin. Many are the miseries that attend on sin, as sword, plague, famine. Prayer helps against them all, 1 Kings viii. 33–38. The psalmist tells us of travellers, seamen, sick men, and captives that cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he

[1] Egressa fuit e tabernaculo spei plena, et animo ad omnia perferenda alacri ac prompto; qui orationis fructus fuit præcipuus.—*Sanctius in* 1 *Sam.*

[2] Nunquam abs te absque te recedo.—*Bern.*

[3] Domus orationis, *i.e.*, divini cultus, cujus præcipua pars est oratio; a precibus enim omnis cultus incipiendus et concludendus.—*Parœus.*

delivered them, Ps. cvii. This is—1. A sure helper; 2. A secret helper; 3. A speedy helper; 4. A strong helper.

1. Prayer is a sure helper. A right qualified prayer for man, matter, manner, never misseth; but ever obtains either the blessing prayed for, or some better thing. God always answers his, *ad utilitatem, si non ad voluntatem; e.g.*, David prays for the life of his child; God denies him in that thing, but gives him a Solomon, which was legitimate, and every way better for him. So Paul, he prays for deliverance from the messenger of Satan. God suffers the trial to abide, but gives him grace to improve it for good, which was better for him than if it had been removed. Though God be the principal actor, yet prayer is *causa adjuvans:* 2 Cor. i. 11, 'You also helping me with your prayers,' *q.d.*, if you will but help me with your prayers, I doubt not of deliverance.

2. It is a secret helper. It secretly undetermines the plots, and reveals the projects of wicked men, and they know not who doth it. One while they curse such a man, and anon they curse such counsel, and such instruments, when it is the prayers of God's people that do them all the mischief. David's prayers turn Ahithophel's policy into folly, 2 Sam. xv. 31.

3. A speedy helper. It brings sudden deliverance. Esther doth but pray, and suddenly Haman comes down. This pierceth the clouds and brings us present aid. Nehemiah, chap. ii. 4, he darts a prayer to heaven, and hath present help. God gave him favour in the sight of the king.

4. It is a strong helper. Nothing like prayer for strength.[1] As David said of Goliath's sword, there is none like that. Luther was wont to say, *Est quædam precum omnipotentia;* Prayer hath a kind of omnipotent power. Like the sword of Saul and the bow of Jonathan, which never returned empty from the battle, 2 Sam. i. 22, it binds God, and holds his hands that he cannot destroy a people; hence the Lord entreats Moses to let him alone,[2] Exod. xxxii. 10; and when the Lord would destroy a people, he forbids his servants praying for them, Jer. vii. 16. This commands the commander of all things, Isa. xlv. 11; it is stronger than any charm, Isa. xxvi. 16. In their trouble they poured out a prayer, or made a soft muttering to thee.[3] You need not go to charms in your troubles; prayer can do that which they cannot do. It is

[1] See how prayer is an eightfold helper, in Mr Green's Fast Sermon on Nehemiah i. 3, p. 26, &c., preached 1644.

[2] Feriendi licentiam petit a Mose qui fecit Mosen.

[3] *Labash*, precationem, proprie significat mussitationem, et passim accipitur pro incantatione.—*Piscator.*

stronger than iron; at the prayers of the church the iron gates fly open, and Peter's fetters fall off, Acts xii. 5–7. The prayer of one Jacob is too strong for four hundred men that come against him, Gen. xxxii. 6, 9, and xxxiii. 4. One Moses in the mount praying is too strong for all the armies in the valley fighting. Jehoshaphat, when surrounded with enemies, by prayer overcomes them. By this Hezekiah overthrew the great army of Sennacherib. By prayer Asa with a few, in comparison of those that came against him, overcame an army of a thousand thousand men, and three hundred chariots, 2 Chron. xiv. 9–11. By this Theodosius overcame the potent armies of his adversaries, and turned their darts upon their own heads.[1]

The Queen of Scotland affirmed that she did more fear the prayers of Mr Knox and his assistants than an army of ten thousand men.[2] There are five keys in the hand of God, and prayer turns them all. There is—1. The key of the heart; 2. The key of the womb; 3. The key of the grave; 4. The key of heaven; 5. The key of hell.

1. There is the key of the heart, and prayer turns this key. Esau came against Jacob with an intent to kill him, but God so changed his heart at the prayer of Jacob, that he fell upon his neck and kissed him.

2. The key of the womb. Hannah, that was barren, prayed, and the Lord gave her a Samuel; and Manoah prayed, and had a Samson.

3. The key of the grave. Hezekiah prays and hath his life prolonged. The prophet by prayer raised the dead child, 2 Kings iv. 32. Jonah by prayer is raised out of the whale's belly, and Christ by prayer raiseth Lazarus.

4. The key of heaven. Elias prayed and it rained; and again he prayed that it might not rain, and it did not rain; he could turn this key which way he pleased by his prayers, James v. 17, 18. So

[1] Theodosius robustissimum exercitum magis orando quam feriendo vicit. Milites qui nobis aderant, retulerunt, extorta sibi esse de manibus quæcunque jaculabantur, cum a Theodosi partibus in adversarios vehemens ventus iret, et non solum quæcunque in eos jaculabantur concitatissime raperet, verum etiam ipsorum tela in eorum corpora rotorqueret. Unde Claudianus, quamvis a Christi nomine alienus, in ejus tamen laudibus dixit;

'O nimium dilecte Deo, cui militat æther,
Et conjurati veniunt ad classica venti.'

—*August. de Civit. Dei.*, lib. v. cap. 26.

[2] Prayers are *Christianorum bombardæ*, The Christian's best artillery.—*Luther*, Oratio justi clavis cæli.—*Aug.*

it is said of Luther, the Elias of his time, *Vir iste potuit quod voluit.* He could but ask and have.

5. The key of hell. By prayer and fasting the devil is cast out,[1] Mat. xvi. 21. By Luther's prayers one was recovered who had given his soul to the devil.

Thus we have seen what great encouragement we have to pray, and in all our straits to cry, Arise, O Lord, and help us.

If any would see more concerning the power of prayer, let him peruse Mr Rob. Bolton's Comforting Afflicted Consciences, pp. 6, 7; Dr Harris, Peter's Enlargement; Dyke, Righteous Man's Tower, p. 77, &c.; Mr Ford on James v. 13, at the end of his Spirit of Bondage, p. 590; and for prayer in general, Bishop Andrews' Catechism, chap. xi. p. 142; Perkins' C. Consc., lib. ii. cap. 6, p. 63, folio; Dr Preston's Saints' Daily Exercise on 1 Thes. v. 17; Mr Cobbet on Prayer; Tactica Sacra, lib. iii. cap. 1, p. 241, &c.; Ambrose's Media, p. 305; D. Pet. Smith, Fast Sermon on Ps. cvii. 6, preached 1644; Dyke on Conscience, chap. iv. p. 53; Capel on Tentation, lib. i. cap. 6, sec. 5, p. 92; Bolton's Comfort to Afflicted Consciences, P. i. cap. 4, p. 375; Fenner's Practical Catechism; Barlow on Timothy, p. 47; Clerk's Mirror, chap. 100.

'Judge the earth.' *Obs.* God is judge of all the earth. All other judges are but substitutes and surrogates to this judge of judges. They are confined to their circuits, but all the world is his circuit. Hence he is called the judge of all the earth, Gen. xviii. 25; Ps. xciv. 2; Heb. xii. 23. A man may appeal from other judges; Paul appealed from Felix to Cæsar. But God is the supreme judge, there is none higher than he, and so no appeals can be made from him, but all must end in him; and therefore the saints, when they could have no justice on earth, have made their final appeals to him who judgeth righteously. So did David, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13, 14; and Jeremiah, chap. xviii. 19, and xx. 12; and Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 23. Take heed then of displeasing him who is King of kings, and Judge of judges. Men are careful to get the favour of great men, Prov. xxix. 26, but what will it avail us to have all the great ones of the world for us, if the great God be against us? Choose rather to displease all the world, than to displease him; and this concerns great ones; they must remember still that there is a greater than they, to whom they must shortly give an account of their stewardship, and at whose bar they must stand

[1] Nihil est homine probo orante potentius.—*Chrysostom.*

to be judged themselves, who here have judged others,[1] Rev. vi. 15, and xx. 12.

'Thou shalt inherit all nations.' *Obs.* All nations are the Lord's inheritance, or, the Lord is the sole possessor of all the world, Deut. x. 14; Job xli. 11; Ps. xxiv. 1, 2. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; he alone is the true proprietary of it. This is his universal kingdom by right of creation and preservation. God hath a special interest in all people. The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker and great protector of both, Job xxxiv. 19; Prov. xxii. 2.

1. Let us then adore and reverence the transcendent majesty of the great God; if a man be king of one kingdom, we stand in awe of him, and reverence him as some great man; and shall not we reverence the great God, who is the king of the kingdoms of the world? Whom will we fear if we do not fear him?

2. Let great ones remember from whom they have their power, riches, kingdoms, and greatness, even from this great possessor of heaven and earth. Let them improve their power to his praise; else he that raised them can ruin them, and he that gives them kingdoms can take them away, Job xii. 17, 18, and xxxiv. 24; Dan. ii. 21. Let them not abuse their power in oppressing the poor, since as good hands have made the one as the other. All nations are God's inheritance, and the poor are a part of it as well as the rich. Let them assure themselves that God will not suffer wrongs that are done to them to pass unpunished, because such as wrong them, wrong a part of his inheritance.

3. It may comfort such as are banished from their habitations for the testimony of Christ and the profession of his truth. You cannot want though you have lost all; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. He is the possessor of all the world; he that hath so rich a mine can never want, Ps. xxiii. 1. The lions natural, and the lions metaphorical may want, but such as fear the Lord shall lack nothing that may be for their good, Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10. Such meek ones shall inherit the earth, Mat. v. 5. In Christ their head all is theirs; the world is theirs, and all that is in it was made more especially for their service, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

[1] See more in my Comment. on 2 Tim. iv. 1, pp. 313, 321.

MEN ARE GODS.

ORNATISSIMIS NEC NON PIENTISSIMIS VIRIS,

EDVARDO IRONSIDE

ET

JOHANNI HUMPHRYS

ARMIGERIS:

HANC SUAM QUALEM QUALEM CONCIONEM, APUD JUDICES OLIM HABITAM, ET JAM (PAULO CORRECTIOREM, MULTO AUCTIOREM) IN LUCEM EDITAM,

IN PERPETUUM GRATI ANIMI MONUMENTUM, D.D.D.

GEORGIUS SWINNOCKE.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To his Reverend Friend Mr Thomas Hall, B.D., Pastor of King's-Norton, in Worcestershire.

Esteemed Sir,—I have now at last, in answer to your desires, and in pursuance of my promise, sent you my meditations on the 6th ver. of the 82d Psalm. Indeed, soon after the sermon was preached, I was sought to, that it might be printed. But I was then scarce fledged, not having in years equalled the days of the shortest month, and so unwilling to venture a flight into the world, lest I should fall. And truly my apology still must be with the good father,[1] when the fruits of his youth were stolen to the press, *Infans eram, nec dum scribere noveram. Nunc, ut nihil aliud profecerim, saltem Socraticum illud habeo, Scio quod nescio.* Such as it is, I commend it to you; and the more cheerfully, because its younger brother, which two or three years since supplanted it, and got away the birthright, did meet with a blessing. The good Lord make it instrumental, in these unhappy and unholy days, wherein Moses and Aaron, magistracy and ministry, are trampled under foot, for the glory of his name, and the good of his people! So prayeth he who never saw you, yet loveth and honoureth you, and desireth to be frequently and fervently remembered by you at the throne of grace,

George Swinnock.

[1] Hiero. in Proœ. ad Obad.

TO THE READER.

In my exposition of the 82d Psalm, when I came to the 7th verse, I perused a sermon of my brother Swinnock's, which he preached before the judges, on that verse. I found it so full and satisfactory, that I must freely confess I received more light from that single sermon than from all the commentators which I had by me. Whereupon, perceiving by his Epistle Dedicatory that he had preached an assize sermon on verse the sixth, which lay by him unprinted, I requested him to publish it with my commentary on this psalm; and thou hast it here annexed to it. The author and his labours are above my praise. If thou please to accept of these, our fraternal first-fruits, if the Lord bless us with life and health together, thou mayest expect ere long from us a commentary on Psalm lxxiii.—a psalm very seasonable for us in these times, who are exercised with such variety of providences. It were to be wished that the ministers of the gospel would join their strength in the promoting the truth. Jesuits can do so to destroy it, why should not we in defending it? That it may be so, is the desire, and shall be the endeavour of

Thine in the Lord,

Thomas Hall.

THE DIGNITY OF MAGISTRACY

AND THE

DUTY OF THE MAGISTRATE.

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.—Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7.

The Book of Psalms may not unfitly be called the analogy of faith, the directory for practice, the epitome of Scripture, the platform for prayer: it is abbreviated in two words—Hosanna,[1] Hallelujah;[2] prayer and praise being the sum and substance of the whole book.

It is a throng of holy affections, saith one, each passion acting apart, wound up to the highest strain by the Spirit of God, breathing poetical eloquence into the heavenly prophet.

This 82d Psalm containeth a reprehension of princes, for their oppression of the people, and it is propounded partly by way of objurgation, partly by way of affirmation.

The text presenteth us with a concession of the magistrates' allegation for their illegal proceedings. They argued that, because they were gods, they might tyrannise over men: that the stamp of a deity on them would make them current coin, though they were never so light. The Holy Ghost granteth them to be gods, but denieth the consequence, that therefore they may live as they list, and rule according to their lusts, or do the work of the devil: for though they are gods in respect of their places and power, yet they are men in respect of their frailty and nature. They must 'die like men, and fall like one of the princes.'

[1] Hosanna signifieth, Save, I pray thee, or preserve, I beseech thee.

[2] Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord.

The sixth verse clotheth men with majesty: 'I have said, Ye are gods,' &c.

The seventh verse clotheth gods with mortality: 'But ye shall die like men.' They are gods *κατὰ τὴν διακονίαν*, that is, in their politic capacity in regard of their power and rule; but they are not so *κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν*, in their physical capacity, and in regard of their nature and essence.

Though ye are now above others, yet shortly ye shall be laid as low as others, and then ye shall both answer and suffer for wronging of others.[1] The height of your places will not excuse the wickedness of your practices; for though ye are high, yet there is one higher than the highest of you, to whom you must give an account of all your injustice and oppression.

We see, then, that the sixth verse containeth a concession of the magistrates' power, how it is by divine appointment and institution.

In it we may take notice, first, Of the magistrates' honour: 'Ye are gods, and children of the Most High.'

Secondly, The author of it: 'I have said it.'

Or the text presenteth us—1. With the magistrates' commission: 'Ye are gods and children of the Most High.' 2. Its seal or confirmation: 'I have said.' The commission for magistracy is here confirmed under the broad seal of heaven.

I, *i.e.*, I that am the Lord of lords and King of kings, the mighty possessor of heaven and earth; I that am Commander-in-chief of the whole world, and have power to appoint whom I please to be my vicegerents, do call and constitute you to be my deputy-lieutenants on earth; I, whose word is sufficient warrant for any office or ordinance; 'I have said, Ye are gods.'

'Have said.' How God speaketh is a point almost unspeakable. God speaketh or saith as well as man, but not after the same manner; he doth not form a voice by such organs or instruments of speech. But when God speaketh he doth either create a voice in the air, as Mat. iii. 17, or declare and make known his mind, sometimes secretly and immediately to the spirits of the prophets; so that phrase, 'the word of the Lord came unto me,' so frequently used in Scripture, is to be understood; sometimes publicly and mediately by the prophets to the people.

So then, I have said, that is, I have in my word manifested this to be my will, that ye should be gods amongst men, Exod. xxi. 28. I that speak, and none may (or who dareth) disannul it; I who

[1] *Ego dixi* concessio est, qua tamen ostendit propheta, nihil perversis judicibus præsidii fore infacta persona quam illis Deus imposuit.—*Calv. in loc.*

said, 'let there be light, and there was light;' I who appointed the sun to rule the day, the moon and the stars to rule the night; I have said, be ye gods, and ye shall be gods. I have appointed you in power and dignity to excel others, and to rule over them on earth, as the greater luminaries do the lesser in the heavens.

'Ye are gods;' that is, in my place and stead amongst men. To receive honour from them both of reverence and obedience; to distribute justice amongst them both zealously and impartially; to be terrors to evil-doers, and encouragements to them that do well; to govern from love to my name, according to the rule of my law, for my honour and praise, as likewise the good and profit of the people.

The word god is taken diversely in Scripture.

1. Properly, and so it is given only to him who is essentially and by nature God; who is an infinite being of himself, and from whom all others have their being; and in this sense it is mentioned sometimes generally, without any limitation to a certain person, as Heb. xii. 29; John iv. 24; sometimes singularly, with a determination to one person, as to the Father, John iii. 16; to the Son, Rom. ix. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 16; to the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

2. Improperly, and so it is given to them who by nature are not gods, as,

1. To the devil, in regard of his unjust usurpation, and wicked men's corruption, 2 Cor. iv. 4. He is called the god of this world; he usurpeth the honour and sovereignty of God, Mat. iv. 9, and the wicked world obeyeth him, as if he were a god, John viii. 44. The god he is, not of the world simply, but of this world, of this sinful world, that lieth in wickedness, 1 John v. 19.

2. To idols, in regard of the false persuasion of degenerate man, 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5. 'There are gods many, and lords many,'[1] that is, in their conceits, who were heathen, (they worshipped stocks and stones, anything, yea, almost all things,) though an idol be nothing in the judgment of a Christian. It is nothing, saith the apostle, *i.e.*, formally, the thing signified is nothing, yet materially it is something, as made of wood, or brass, or the like.

3. To magistrates, Exod. iv. 16, who have their commission from God, Rom. xiii., who do the work of God, 2 Cor. xiii., Rom. iii. 4, who ought to do all for God, 2 Chron. xix. 6.

'And all of you are children of the Most High.' It was no wonder that they were called gods, for here they are the children

[1] Cælestes, aërii, terrestres, marini dii. As many gods as creatures almost amongst the heathen.

of the Most High; now children are called after their father's name.

This term, son of God, or child of the Most High,[1] is attributed,

1. To Christ, because of his eternal generation, Ps. ii. 7. He is the only-begotten of the Father, John iii. 16.

2. To angels, both because of their practice—they serve God, not as slaves a master, but as children a father, cheerfully, heartily, with filial alacrity and delight; and because of their privilege, God useth them, not as slaves, but sons. They are near him always, beholding the face of their Father, Mat. xviii. 10.

3. To men, and that in regard of the purity and holiness in them —they resemble God as a child his father; or in regard of the grace and favour God bestoweth on them—in these respects all believers are the children of God; or in regard of their power and greatness —they are privileged to be higher than others in place, as sons are before and above servants; and they are like him in their dignity and authority; so magistrates. The Chaldee paraphraseth, as the angels of the high God,[2] because magistrates should be like angels for wisdom, 2 Sam. xiv. 24.

The words being thus opened, will yield us this doctrine.

Doctrine.—That the God of heaven hath appointed magistrates to be gods on earth.

He is God by nature, and he hath given them to be gods by name. The deity was by incarnation clothed with the human nature, and humanity is here by God's designation clothed with the divine name. 'I will praise thee before the gods,' saith David, Ps. cxxxviii. 1; that is, the tune of my heart shall be high in singing thy praise, even before them that are by thy command highest in place.

The sun in the higher world shineth most gloriously, yet he communicateth some of his light to the moon, whereby she surpasseth, and is as queen, among the glittering stars: so God, the true sun, is infinitely above all; he shineth eminently with his own native light and lustre, yet he bestoweth of his beauty and brightness on some men, whereby they excel and are above others in this lower world.

For the explication of this truth, I shall only shew in what respects magistrates are called gods, and then proceed to application.

Magistrates are in a twofold respect called gods.

1. In respect of their honourable dignity.

2. In respect of their answerable duty.

[1] And ye all sons of the Most High.—*Ainsw. leg.*

[2] Ainsw. *in loc.*

It speaketh that their privilege is high, and that their practices should be holy.

1. In respect of their dignity. God speaketh the nature of magistracy to be honourable by the names which he giveth to the magistrate.[1] Government is not a mean employment, but a great preferment. Magistracy is here by God himself invested with majesty

It is observable that God ascribeth to magistrates the most honourable names among men. Great men, 2 Sam. iii. 38; nobles, 2 Chron. xxiii. 20; princes, Ps. lxxxiii. 11; kings, his kings, Ps. xviii. 50; fathers, 1 Sam. xxix. 11; chief of the people, Judges xx. 2; heads over the people, Exod. xviii. 25; dignities, glories,[2] Jude 8. The ancients of the people, Isa. iii. 14, not only because aged persons were ordinarily elected; for 'with the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding,' Job xii. 12, but also because aged persons are honourable persons.[3] Men are commanded to bow down before the hoary head, and reverence the ancient, Lev. xix. 32.

Nay, God giveth magistrates not only those names which are in most esteem amongst men, but the names of angels.

Angels are the perfection, as it were, of the creation, the topstone of this glorious building. When the Spirit of God would speak a thing or person to be excellent, it doth resemble them to angels: 'My lord is wise as an angel of God,' 2 Sam. xiv. 20; and Acts vi. 15, 'They beheld his face as if it had been the face of an angel.' Further, the great happiness of holy ones in heaven is set forth by their likeness to angels: 'They shall be as angels,' Mat. xxii. 30. Now what glorious persons then are magistrates, that have the names of angels given them! Angels are called dominions, principalities, powers, Col. i. 16; Eph. i. 21; so are magistrates, Jude 8; Titus iii. 1, 'Be subject to principalities and powers;' but the text speaketh more of their dignity. Magistrates have not only the highest names of the most honourable visible creatures, men; and of the most honourable invisible creatures, angels; but of the Creator, of God himself, the fountain and standard of all dignity and honour: 'I have said, Ye are gods.' When Jacob would manifest to Joseph's children the extraordinary respect he had for their father, he doth it thus: 'My name be named on them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,' Gen.

[1] Ceterum hic nomen sicuti paulo post, et aliis locis pro judicibus sumitur, quibus specialem gloriæ notam insculpsit Deus.—*Calv in Ps.* lxxxii. 1.

[2] Magnifica existimatio, honor, gloria.—*Eras.*

[3] Maxima debetur capiti, &c.

xlviii. 16. It is a great honour to be called the servant of God. Paul gloried in this, Titus i. 1; so did David, more in being a subject to God, than a king over men, Ps. xxxvi. title. It is a greater honour and favour to be called God's son, John i. 12; 1 John iii. 1. 'Is it a mean thing,' saith David, 'to be the king's son-in-law?' 1 Sam. xviii. 23. Magistrates are children of the Most High, they are sons to the King of kings. But the greatest honour of all is to be called gods; for God to say, my name be named on them, this is the highest name that can be given; here is a *ne plus ultra*. This is the highest name, which is above all names, and, as the diamond to the ring, addeth both virtue and value to whatsoever it is affixed.

As because gold is the most precious excellent metal, therefore we lay gold over other things; we gild pewter, brass, yea, silver itself; so because God is the most excellent name, it is laid to other things, that thereby their worth may be set forth: as the sons of God, Job i. 6; the city of God, Ps. xlvi. 4; the river of God, Ps. lxv. 9; the kingdom of God.[1]

Now in their dignity magistrates resemble God in these two or three particulars,[2] and therefore are fitly called gods.

First, in receiving honour from others.[3] Honour accompanieth power, as the shadow the body. There is naturally in man an awe and respect towards those that are magistrates: they are the fathers of their country; and their subjects, like children, owe them both obedience and reverence. Divine worship is to be given only to God in heaven, but civil worship may be given to gods on earth. David speaketh of himself being a king: 'His glory is great in thy salvation; honour and majesty hast thou put upon him,' Ps. xxi. 5.

Joseph, when advanced to be a ruler in Egypt, rideth in the second chariot, and hath one crying before him, Bow the knee, Gen. xli. 42, 43. The most high God, that giveth them kingdoms,

[1] It is ordinary in the Hebrew to add the name of God to a thing to heighten the excellency of it. A man of God is as much as an extraordinary man, an excellent man. It is said of the church, compared to a vine, 'She sent forth her branches as goodly cedars,' Ps. lxxx. 10; so we read it; but in Heb. 'as the cedars of God,' that is, tall and excellent cedars; and so in many other places; because all the creature excellencies are derived from him, and are but a drop, a beam, a print of that glory and majesty which is in him.

[2] Dii per analogiam, tanquam Deum imitantes.—*Theodor.*

[3] This is a godlike prerogative. God is clothed with majesty and honour, Ps. civ. 1. The blessed and only potentate, to whom all people must pay this tribute. In this the gods on earth resemble him.

doth also give them glory, and majesty, and honour, Dan. v. 28, 29. God indeed hath the greatest honour, as the supreme governor and lawgiver, but magistrates receive it upon his account, as they are his representatives and vicegerents. 'When I went out to the gate,' saith Job,[1] (that is, to the place of administering justice, for that work was done in the gates, as Ruth iv. 1; Job v. 4; Ps. cxxvii. 5,) 'the young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and they laid their hands on their mouths,' Job xxix. 8, 9.

'My son,' saith Solomon, 'fear thou the Lord and the king,' Prov. xxiv. 21. God is the proper object of fear; hence the Greeks call him fear;[2] but the gods, because invested with his authority, and intrusted with the administration of his kingdom upon earth, are also to be feared as superior to us, though inferior to God.

Secondly, Their dignity appeareth (and in this they resemble God also) in giving laws to others. Magistrates have power to enact laws for the encouraging of virtue and discouraging of vice, for the preservation of peace among their people.[3] Zanchy saith there are three offices of the magistrate, whereof one is to ordain laws for the worship of God and the welfare of men.

There is, indeed, one supreme and absolute lawgiver, James iv. 12, whose will and word must be the rule of others' laws. Besides, in spirituals, none can give laws to bind the conscience but God, Isa. xxxiii. 21. In that sense the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver; but in external policy the laws of men are to be observed: and they have power to make such laws as are suitable unto, and convenient for the wealth and safety of their dominions.

The end of magistracy sheweth their legislative authority; for neither will piety be promoted, nor the public good procured, or peace preserved, without it. And questionless God would never have enjoined subjects to obey, if magistrates had not power to command.

Laws are the walls and bulwarks of a nation, which in a great part may secure it against invasions from abroad and insurrections at home;[4] the standing militia, which protecteth the lives of the people; the hedge, which keeps men in from oppressing their neighbours; the deeds and evidences which give us a right and title to

[1] Job fuit Rex.

[2] Θεὸς *quasi* Δεὸς.

[3] This is a God-like privilege, Isa. xxxiii. 21, to make laws for men, to prescribe what creatures shall do, and what they shall forbear.—*Zanch. de Magistrat.*

[4] That commonwealth only can be safe where the people obey the magistrate, and the magistrate the law.—*Solon.*

our estates,—they are the nerves and sinews of the body politic, or as physic to the natural body to prevent diseases, and purge out ill humours.

Man is by nature an untamed heifer, loathing the yoke of subjection, prone to rage and rebel, so that he needeth all means imaginable to rule and restrain him. The wise Governor of all things hath therefore thought fit not only to give Christians a natural law and moral law from himself, but also positive laws from men, that this threefold cord, which is not easily broken, may bind him fast. And this surely speaketh magistrates to be like God; for even the heathen themselves would ascribe their laws to some one of their gods. Zoroastres, who gave laws to the Persians, ascribed them to Oromazen; Trismegistus, among the Egyptians, ascribed his laws to Mercurius; Lycurgus, who gave laws to the Lacedæmonians, would make Apollo the author of them; Solon and Draco, among the Athenians, said that Minerva was their lawgiver. So almost in every nation, they who had the legislative power ascribed the invention of their laws to their false gods. But the word of God, which is a perfect rule for all men, doth empower magistrates to make laws, not according to their lusts, but agreeable to his revealed will.

Thirdly, The dignity of magistracy, wherein they likewise are like to God, consisteth in their executing the law; in punishing the nocent, and acquitting the innocent.[1] Execution is the life of the law, the lustre and glory of the prince, the security of the good people. A law unexecuted is like a sword without an edge, for no use or service; and a magistrate that neglecteth his duty herein is like a winter's sun, glorious for majesty, but yielding no warming or refreshing influences to them that are under him; or like the king's head on a sign-post, only for show.

The God of heaven doth not cast away the perfect man, nor help the evil-doer, Job viii. 20: he beholdeth the righteous with favour, he woundeth the heads of sinners, Ps. lxviii. 21; he cutteth off the workers of iniquity; he killeth and maketh alive; with him is the fountain of life, Ps. xxxix. 9. As waters flow from a fountain, so doth life from God. And he can easily slay men: Job iv. 9, 'By the blast of God they perish.' To save and kill is a God-like privilege; the power of life and death is in the hands of these earthly gods: they enliven with their smiles; their favour, or the light of a king's countenance, is life: they kill with their

[1] Three uses of the civil sword: 1. Ad vindictam; 2. Ad protectionem bonorum; 3. Ad executionem justitiæ.—*Willet in Rom.* xiii.

frowns: 'The wrath of a king is the messenger of death,' Prov. xvi. 14, 15. Herein their dignity and civil godship appeareth, that they can give, by reprieve or pardon, or take away a life which is forfeited to the law. Cæsar's speech was high,[1] when he was opposed by Metellus in his taking away the money out of the Roman treasury: Let me alone, or I will kill thee presently; and then, to qualify his threat, and magnify his strength, he told him, Young man, thou knowest it is harder for me to speak it than to do it. But this is certain, rulers are not for nothing called powers, Titus iii. 1. It is in their power, though not to tyrannise at their pleasure, yet to execute the laws even to the death of the offender.

2. Magistrates are called gods, not only in regard of their dignity, but also in regard of their duty.[2] They ought to resemble God in their execution of justice amongst men. God administereth justice impartially, and so should the gods.

The Judge of all the earth doth right, and the judges that are on the earth should do right: 'God doth judge the world in righteousness, and ministereth judgment to the poor in uprightness,' Ps. ix. 8; 'And they who rule over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

Justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne, Ps. lxxxix. 14. The Holy Ghost alludeth to the thrones of earthly princes, which were underpropped with pillars, as Solomon's throne with lions, 1 Kings xix. 20, that were both a support and an ornament to it. Now, saith the psalmist, justice and judgment are the pillars upon which God's throne standeth, or, as Calvin expoundeth it, the robe and diadem, the purple and sceptre, the regalia with which God's throne is adorned.[3] Thus magistrates ought to make good their pattern, and to take heed what they do, because they judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with them in the judgment,[4] 2 Chron. xix. 6. Magistrates are therefore called gods, because they should, as God doth, do impartial justice without respect of persons; protecting the godly, as being the ministers of God for their good, Rom. xiii. 4, and punishing the wicked, which are malignant enemies to God and them.[5]

[1] Plut. in Vit. Cæs.

[2] Magistratus dii vocantur quia sunt vicarii dei in administrando jure, exequenda justitia, tuendo bonos, puniendo malos.—*Polan. Syntag.*, lib. vii. cap. 19.

[3] Propheta ad regum insignia vel pompas alludens, dicit judicium et justitiam esse fulturam solii ejus, acsi diceret loco sceptri, vel purpuræ vel diadematis, his insignibus ornari Deum quo justus, et æquus mundi judex.

[4] Calvin *in loc.*

[5] Large Annot. in Exodus xxii. 28.

Now the impartiality of the gods, as of God, in executing justice, appeareth in these three particulars.

First, In not favouring any for their nearness. Magistrates must imitate God in this, who is no respecter of persons, but judgeth every man according to his works, 1 Peter i. 17. 'Though Coniah be to me,' saith God, 'as the signet on my right hand, yet I will pluck him thence,'[1] Jer. xxii. 24; that is, though he were as near and dear to me as a king's sealing-ring, which is most carefully kept and tenderly preserved, worn commonly, yea continually, on some finger, yet I would do justice in plucking him off and casting him from me. Nay, when God's own Son, who was the Son of his infinite love and choicest delight, became liable to the lash of the law, as being a sinner by imputation, God would not spare him in the least, but made him bear the curse of the law, Rom. viii. 32. Zaleucus, the lawgiver, having enacted that every person guilty of adultery should lose both his eyes, did yet, when his own son was found guilty of that fault, put out one of his own eyes and one of his son's. But the great God was more just when his Son was a surety for sinners: he caused him to pay the utmost farthing; he suffered the law to have its full stroke at him. Oh how just was God, that rather than violate the least tittle of his law, would sign a warrant with his own hand, and confirm the commission with his own seal, for his dearest Son's execution!

Thus should magistrates hear and determine, without any respect to friends or relations,[2] Prov. xxiv. 23. To have respect of persons is not good; yea, it is very evil. Magistrates must hear the cause, not the person, and mind not the man, but the matter which is brought before them.

David was faulty, and he smarted sharply for it, in sparing Amnon, guilty of incest, and Absalom, guilty of murder, because they were his sons. But Levi did nobly, who said to his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children, Deut. xxxiii. 9.

Pompey, aspiring to the Roman empire,[3] and perceiving that Cato was against him, sent his friend Minucius to Cato to demand his two nieces, one for himself, the other for his son. But when the messenger had delivered his errand, Cato gave him this answer: Go tell Pompey, Cato is not to be won by women. As

[1] Etiamsi fuisset Jeconiah mihi charissimus, quem semper in oculis ferrem.—*Jun. in loc.*

[2] Prosopolepsis dicitur, si quis paribus imparia, vel imparibus paria tribuat.—*Coc.*

[3] Plutarch in Vit. Cat. Utic.

long as Pompey shall deal uprightly, I shall be his friend, and in a greater degree than any marriage can ever make me. Surely this moralist will condemn many Christian rulers, of whom it is said that the sun might as soon be hindered from running his race, as he from doing what was just and upright.

God will not, upon any pretence whatsoever, have his own person accepted, Job xiii. 8, much less the persons of men.

Secondly, In not sparing or fearing any for their greatness. Rulers ought to be men of courage, Exod. xviii. 21: 'The fear of man bringeth a snare,' Prov. xxix. 25, and is often the cause why justice is perverted. Pilate feared Cæsar, John xix. 12, 13, and therefore, against his conscience, condemned Christ. The great God of heaven feareth none, spareth none, for their glory or greatness: he putteth the mighty out of their seats, Luke i. 52; he bindeth kings in chains, and princes in fetters of iron, Ps. cxlix. 8; 'The day of the Lord shall be upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,' Isa. ii. 12–14. He is the almighty, all-powerful God, and therefore cares not for any might or power of man.

Thus the gods on earth should do justice on all, great as well as small, fearing none but the God of heaven, Deut. i. 17; 'You shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's.' Papinianus is worthy of eternal memory, who chose rather to die than to justify or excuse the fratricide of Bossianus the emperor. Holy Job, as he was eminent for fearing God, so likewise for not fearing men: Job xxix. 17, 'I brake the jaw of the wicked, and pulled the spoil out of his teeth.' Great men oftentimes are like lions, or ravenous beasts, that prey on others without fear or pity. Now the care of this pious magistrate was to secure his people against such oppressors.

When David kept his father's sheep, 'and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, David rose after the lion and smote him, and took the lamb out of his mouth,' 1 Sam. xvii. 34. Every magistrate is, or should be, a shepherd. God saith of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,' Isa. xliv. 28. The man after God's own heart was called to feed his people Israel, Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71. Homer calleth Agamemnon ποιμένα λαῶν, the shepherd or the feeder of the people. And when lions or bears, men that are great and strong, come to devour their flock, they ought to protect or defend them. He is a base hireling that hides his head when the

wolf cometh in the night, though he endeavour to preserve his sheep from injury by the flies in the day. For one wolf will do more mischief in a night than a thousand flies in a year. As the day of judgment will make no difference between great and small, rich and poor, noble and ignoble; for then the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, will hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and will say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the lamb, Rev. vi. 15, 16, so should not the day of executing justice in this world.[1]

The impartiality of God, and also of the gods, consisteth in not taking gifts. God is no taker of gifts, 2 Chron. xix. 7. 'Riches prevail not in the day of wrath,' Prov. xi. 4; 'Neither silver nor gold can deliver them from his indignation,' Zeph. i. 18.

Thus should magistrates resemble his majesty, not perverting justice either for having or for hope of a reward. A bribe received or expected clogs or obscures the course of justice. A golden pen must not write the discharge; when the hand of a judge is greased with gold, it cannot hold the sword of justice, but will let it slip, at least strike very partially.

'Thou shalt not wrest judgment, thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous,' Deut. xvi. 19.

The Roman story telleth us of two persons that were competitors for some place of preferment, and that a senator being asked, for which of the two he would give his voice; answered, for neither; because, saith he, one hath nothing, and the other hath never enough. He knew that poverty and covetousness are both unmeet qualifications for a ruler. The former maketh magistracy obnoxious to contempt and derision, and the latter prompteth the magistrate on to injustice and oppression.

A ruler that is a bribe-taker is a thief in robes, and is only differenced from those that are in rags by this, that the height of his place doth increase his sin, and aggravate his condemnation.[2]

I come now from the explication to the application of the doctrine.

This truth will be useful, first, by way of information. If the God of heaven hath appointed magistrates to be gods on earth, it

[1] Of Trajan the emperor it is said, that he neither feared nor hated any man, but that he heard the causes of his subjects without prejudicate impiety, examined them without sinister obliquity, and judged them without unjust partiality.

[2] Privati fures in compedibus ætatem agunt, publici vero in auro et purpura visuntur.—*Cat.*

informeth us that magistracy is of divine authority. Government is not an invention of some men, who desire to lord it over others, but it is the institution of God: 'I have said, Ye are gods.'[1] The scholars of Pythagoras counted his *ipse dixit* to be sufficient. Surely, then, God's saying it must be an establishing it to us. If where the word of a king is there be power, Eccles. viii. 4, then questionless where the word of a God is, there is warrant enough for any office. Now this is the word of God which cometh to the magistrate,[2] as Christ saith, John x. 33, authorising him, and appointing him to that ordinance. The magistrate is therefore called the minister of God, Rom. xiii. 4. As justices are called the king's justices, because they act by commission from him; so magistrates are called the Lord's ministers, because they rule by authority derived from the Lord. Coin is carried to the mint, and there stamped with the superscription and image of the chief magistrate, and then called his coin, because current by his authority.

Governors are not of the devil, as satanical spirits have affirmed, nor of men, as others have asserted, but of God, Rom. xiii. 1.

As in the waters there be some greater, some smaller fish; and in the earth there be mountains and hills, as well as plains and valleys; and in the heavens there are stars differing from each other in glory; so amongst men there are some greater than others in power, higher in place, and excelling them in authority and glory.

As the natural body is distinguished by God himself into comely and uncomely parts, 1 Cor. xii. 23, 24, so is the political body into members noble and ignoble.

The bees in their commonwealth, as is reported, have a commander-in-chief, a master bee; the lion claimeth a command and superiority among the beasts of the field; the angels in heaven have a chief, Michael the archangel, Jude 9; 1 Thes. iv. 16. The schoolmen indeed, being more bold than they ought, do divide the angels into three hierarchies, and each hierarchy into three several orders. The first hierarchy, they say, comprehendeth cherubims, seraphims, and thrones; the second, dominions, principalities, and powers; the third, mights, archangels, and angels. As also they assert the reason of these several names. But the more modest and learned expositors, who join not in the aforesaid presumptuous division, do yet generally conclude an order, distinction, and pre-

[1] Omnis potestas a summa potestate.

[2] Non de quolibet verbo Dei, sed de speciali dominandi mandato.—*Calvin.*

eminence amongst angels from Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16; Dan. x. 13. Nay, there is a government amongst the very devils; there is not only a prince of angels, Dan. x., but Beelzebub a prince amongst devils, Mat. xii. 24. They that cause so much disorder amongst others, yet have some order among themselves. We read of the devil and his angels, Mat. xxv. 41; there is a kind of government in hell, though some would turn all out of the earth.

The apostle Peter indeed calleth magistracy an ordinance of man, 1 Pet. ii. 13, though Paul assureth us it is of God: 'The powers that be are ordained of God,' Rom. xiii. 1; and the magistrate is the minister of God, ver. 4.

Magistracy is an ordinance of man in a fourfold respect.

1. *Subjectivè.* As man is the subject thereof, by them it is executed. Our princes as well as our prophets are men of like passions with us.

2. *Objectivè.* As man is the object thereof, about them it is exercised. It is for the punishment of bad men, and encouragement of good men, for the deciding differences between man and man.

3. *Τελικῶς, Finaliter.* As man is the end thereof. He is the minister of God for man's good.

But these things will not prove magistracy to be a mere human ordinance, for in these three respects the ministry as well as the magistracy may be said to be a human ordinance, man being both the subject, object, and end thereof; yet what sober man ever denied the ministry to be an ordinance of God?

4. It is ordinance of man in regard of the kind of it, each nation having a liberty to choose what form of government they apprehend most commodious for them. Magistracy is ordained by God, though this particular magistrate or this form of government be appointed by man. The *genus* of magistracy is from God; yet the *species*, whether monarchy, democracy, or aristocracy, may be at the choice of men.

Further, though the magistrate should be of the devil, a wicked, ungodly person, yet the magistracy is of God.

There is a difference between the office or power itself and the manner of exercising it, and the means of attaining it. The first is always of God, but not always the second and third. The power of Nero was of God, as the Holy Ghost speaketh fully, Rom. xiii., though he exercised it in a devilish manner, oppressing and killing the good, encouraging and acquitting such as were evil. The power of our Richard the Third was of God, though he attained it

by ungodly and devilish means—the murdering his own sovereign and nephew.

There are four particulars which will clearly demonstrate the truth of this assertion—namely, that magistracy is of divine authority.

1. First, Their commission is from God. 'By me kings rule,'[1] saith God, Prov. viii. 15. Subordinate magistrates may have their commission from men, but supreme magistrates have their commissions from God only.

'The powers that be are ordained of God,' Rom. xiii. 1; not simply ordained of God as other things, saith a learned interpreter,[2] but specially by precept and command from God. There are other things of God, saith he, as famine, war, sickness, poverty; but they are not ordained by precept.[3]

Daniel telleth Nebuchadnezzar that God had commissionated him to rule over men: Dan. ii. 37, 38, 'Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.' These higher powers are so clearly from the highest power, that their throne is called God's throne: 1 Chron. xxix. 23, 'Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David.' Their sceptre is called God's sceptre, and their judgment God's judgment: Deut. i. 17, 'Ye shall not respect persons; for the judgment is God's.'

Besides, we find that several persons received their regal investiture from God himself, as Saul, David, Jehu, Cyrus, which last was by God named and ordained to the government of the Persian monarchy above sixty years before he was born, Isa. xliv. 28, and xlv. 1.

2. Their command to govern is from God; the several precepts from God to men in high places doth fully speak their power to be of God. Why should God command them to rule according to his laws who have no authority to rule at all? Jer. xxii. 2, 3, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah. Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoil out of the hand of the oppressed,' &c. If the matter or substance of their rule were unlawful, surely God would not own it so far as to prescribe rules for the manner of executing it. Now God through the whole Scriptures scattereth many precepts for directions to princes how they should govern, and what they should practise, Deut. xvii.

[1] Εκ δε Διὸς βασιλῆες. [2] Willet *in locum.*

[3] Cujus jussu homines, ejus jussu reges.—*Ireneus*, lib. v. cap. 24.

3. Their protection is from God. As a king defendeth his inferior officers in the execution of their offices, so the King of kings defendeth magistrates in the discharge of their trusts. 'God standeth in the congregation among the gods,' Ps. lxxxii. 1, not only to observe whether they offer injuries to others, but also to take care that they receive no injuries from others. God is a stronger guard to the judge than any sheriff. And were not he a wall of fire about some worthy zealous justices, many beastly persons, who have been curbed by them, and hindered from leaping over the hedges of divine commands, would have trampled them under feet, if not torn them in pieces.

It is worthy our observation how exceedingly God manifesteth his power and zeal for the help of magistrates against all opposition. Korah and his company conspire against Moses and Aaron, magistracy and ministry, Num. xvi., and would have brought in anarchy. Indeed, both those ordinances have the same adversaries. Those that would level the ministry, making preachers, Jeroboam-like, of the lowest of the people, and filling the pulpit, as Noah's ark, with creatures clean and unclean, will at last level the magistracy too, and make the throne as low and as common as the pulpit. But observe what God saith of these opposers of magistracy and ministry, and what God doth to them; for his saying, that they are 'gathered together against the Lord,' ver. 11. They wounded God through the sides of Moses and Aaron. They that murmur and conspire against God's delegated servants, murmur and conspire against God himself. And surely God will first or last be too hard for those that thus harden themselves against him. For see what he doth to them. 'The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods; they and all that belonged to them went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them,' ver. 32, 33. God hath strange punishments for such strange principles and practices. He will work miraculously; but that he will make such as are against magistrate and minister exemplary.

Ps. xviii. 50, 'Great deliverance giveth God to the king.' The supreme magistrate is in great dangers, therefore God giveth him great deliverances; as he is liable to more harm than others by reason of his place, so he may expect, if he be godly especially, more help than others, by reason of the divine promise, 'Be strong, and of a good courage, be not afraid; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest,' Joshua i. 9. Josephus, from the extraordinary escape of Titus, at the view of the walls of Jerusalem,

observeth, *Imperatorum pericula Deum curare,* That God is the magistrates' guard.[1]

4. The subjection of their people to them is from God.[2] Every man is by nature a Quaker, a leveller; like a colt unwilling to be bridled; like an untamed heifer, which cannot endure the yoke of subjection. It is therefore through the wonderful working of God that a few persons, or sometimes one man, as head, should rule such a monstrous body as the multitude. If he that ruleth the boisterous waves of the sea, and shutteth them up with bars and doors, Ps. lxv. 7, did not put forth the same almighty power in quieting the spirits, and stilling the tumults of the people, it could never be done. Well might David say, 'It is God that subdueth my people under me,'[3] Ps. cxliv. 1, 2.

The multitude is an unruly monster. It was a true saying of that brutish emperor, Tiberius, to one that applauded his felicity in attaining the power of so large an empire: Oh, said he, you know not what a beast the empire is, how unruly, and untoward, how headstrong, and hard to be tamed.[4] The multitude is a beast with many heads, saith another; cut off one, nay many, yet there will millions remain still. Now, that one should keep millions in awe, how could it be if there were not a divine constitution in a human person? The devil is such an enemy to man's peace and welfare, and every man's nature so opposite to rule and restraint, that if there were not somewhat more than human in magistracy, one man would be a beast, nay, a devil to another, and be no whit kept under by the higher powers. But we see clearly God hath put such a majesty on princes, that their people are afraid of their fury, reverence their persons, and submit to their authority. He that readeth the wonderful strength of the horse, how his neck is clothed with thunder; how the glory of his nostrils is terrible; how he paweth in the valley, and goeth out to meet the armed men; how he mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted, nor turneth back from the sword, Job xxxix. 19–26; he that considereth the power of the elephant, how he moveth his tail like a cedar, how his bones are like strong pieces of brass, and like bars of iron, &c., Job xl. 15–24; when he observeth how these strong, fierce creatures are ridden and ruled by weak man, and turned about at his pleasure, will presently conclude the reason to be this, because God hath put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the field,

[1] De Bello Judaic., lib. v. cap. 2.

[2] Every one hath in him the mind of a king.—*Calvin on* 1 *Pet.* v. 5.

[3] ὑποτάσσων, subjecting them to me.—*Septuagint. leg.*

[4] Sueton.

Gen. ix. 2. So truly he that beholdeth many millions of men subject to the word, to the command of one, when they have strength enough to overthrow thousands, must needs acknowledge that it is the Lord's doing, and it ought to be marvellous in their eyes.

Secondly, If magistrates be gods, and that by the appointment of the living God, ('I have said, Ye are gods,') it informeth us that they are guilty of great impiety that contemn and disesteem magistracy; they vilify those whom God doth dignify, and fight against God in endeavouring to pull down that order and that ordinance which he himself hath set up. Such men, by denying rule and authority, seem to be beasts, and to put off all humanity. For places, without some in power, would be rather wildernesses than cities, and the inhabitants rather herds of beasts than societies of men.

There are two sorts of men guilty of this sin.

First, Those that in their principles deny magistracy to be from God. There have in several ages been some, that because they themselves were subjects and inferiors, would therefore deny all sovereignty and superiority. The Donatists, whom Augustine undertaketh, were of that opinion; and so were the Anabaptists and libertines in Germany, who armed the rude multitude against their magistrates, and were opposed by Luther. And truly in our days there are some who, against the light both of nature and Scripture, affirm government to be a work of darkness. Though it be written in the fleshly tables of their hearts, and in the tables of stone by the finger of God, that fathers and mothers, civil as well as natural, must be honoured, yet they are so wicked and blind that they will not see or read it. In the apostles' days there were ungodly men, that turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, despisers of dominions, Jude 8, such as aimed at anarchy, (according to Calvin's comment,) and the overthrow of all authority; being proud, they scorned rule, and being licentious, they were impatient of restraint.

1. Order is needful to them that are in a state of innocency. Angels who continue in their estate of integrity differ in point of superiority; Michael the archangel, Jude 4. *Michael* speaketh the name of his person, and *archangel* the nature of his office. There are thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, different degrees among those angelical spirits. Surely if such order be conducible to the happiness of perfect angels, it is the more desirable for the happiness of imperfect man. And if there be such order in heaven, it is no part of our bondage to have some order on earth; and therefore the Grecians do upon good ground use the

word ἀρχὴ, to signify superiority or government, which, in its proper and native acception, signifieth *principium*, to set forth the antiquity of government, which had a being as soon as the world had a beginning.[1]

2. Order and superiority are needful to them that are in a state of apostasy. The more wild man is, the more need he hath of a yoke; the more heady our horses are, the more we curb them. Unruly persons, for their own good as well as for others, require restraint.

The hearts of wicked men are like the sea, which cannot rest, but is ever casting up mire and dirt. Now, what a deluge would the boisterous waves of their unsanctified wills and affections cause, if there were no banks of magistracy to bound them in.[2] If some men were not gods to others, most men would be devils to others.

Sin must be discouraged; evil-doers must be punished; human society must be preserved; the good must be protected; our liberties and properties must be defended; justice must be executed; the poor must be relieved; wholesome laws must be maintained; and how can either of these be done without magistrates? Many fear not sin, nor the God of heaven, and if it were not for suffering from the gods on earth, their lusts should be their law, and they would deprive the innocent of their liberties, estates, and lives, and turn the places where they live into Aceldamas, fields of blood; nay, make the earth worse in some respects than hell; for in hell there is no oppression, as no injustice, no guilty person freed, and no guiltless person punished; but had these men their wills, it should be so upon earth.

3. Again, order or magistracy is not only necessary to those that are in a state of nature, but to those also that are in a state of grace, Titus iii. 1, 2, Rom. xiii. 1, 2. When they begin to be servants to God, they do not cease to be subjects to the gods. Christianity doth not consume but confirm magistracy: as a man, I obey and honour the magistrate for fear; as a Christian, for conscience sake; so that religion addeth a stronger tie and obligation. The sceptre in Christ's hand doth not strike the crown off

[1] Politic government was probably then instituted, when man was first created under the old covenant of works; for it is a natural blessing, and grounded upon the fifth command of the moral law, which commenced upon man's first creation, before Adam's fall; and the rather may we thus judge, because it is a law of nature, which was binding in man's estate of innocency; besides, Christ himself, who knew no sin, yet minded this duty of subjection, Luke ii. 51; Col. i. 16–22; Mat. xxii. 23.

[2] Augustine thinketh that all civil subjection of one man to another came in by sin, though not all natural subjection of children to parents.—*De Civit. Dei*, lib. xix.

the magistrate's head: no, it maketh it sit the faster, especially where their person is crowned with grace, and the power improved for the glory of Christ. One ordinance of God doth not weaken, but strengthen another.

I shall inquire a little, and very briefly, into the reasons which some urge against magistracy and order.

1. Say some, We are the Lord's freemen, and therefore should not be servants of men: 1 Cor. vii. 23, 'Ye are bought with a price; be not the servants of men.'

Ans. That place indeed forbiddeth sinful subjection to men, but not civil subjection to men. I may serve a prince, but I may not sin at his precept and command; if men command what God forbiddeth, I must disobey men to obey God. Or that text may import that I must give no man liberty to give my conscience laws; no, my absolute dependence for soul-direction must be only on Christ and his word.

Those whom Christ makes free are free indeed, but it is from bondage to their own and others' lusts, not from obedience to others' righteous laws.

Obj. 2. Some tell us, they are just, and need no law, for they are a law to themselves. Now laws, say they, are for them that are wicked: 1 Tim. i. 9, 'The law is not made for the righteous, but for the wicked.'

Ans. They that are so good that they need no laws for their correction, live among the wicked, and therefore need laws for their protection.

That forecited place in Timothy is meant of the moral law, of which the apostle testifieth, that believers are free from its curse or malediction; but surely not from it as a rule for their conversations.

The hearts of the best are bad enough, and apt to wander, therefore they need all means, the hedge of man's laws, as well as of God's laws, to keep them in. Laws are hedges both to fence them in from others' violence, and to prevent their wandering out.

Obj. 3. Paul forbiddeth going to law, 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2, therefore no use of a magistrate.

Ans. The apostle doth not absolutely forbid going to law; but, 1. Before heathen judges, when godly Christians might have decided their differences and ended their controversies. They that deny to refer their lighter causes to honest understanding persons, give occasion to others to suspect both their causes and Christianity, ver. 1, 3, 4, 5. 2. Among brethren; the very name of brethren should allay heats and charm discords, ver. 8. The nearer

their relation (though spiritual) was, the dearer their affection should have been, and therefore the sinfuller their division. 3. About trivial and small matters. If Mohammedans go to law for mean toys, they are punished. 4. With vindictive spirits: whereas a Christian should go to law with a meek, mild, gospel spirit, without either hate or heat, as tilters break their spears on each others' breast, yet without wrath or intention of hurt. So, then, it is not simply unlawful to go to law before heathen, if right cannot be had elsewhere, and the matter be weighty, and we do it not out of spleen or malice, but with meekness and quietness of spirit.

Obj. 4. They tell us God is their keeper, therefore they need neither law nor magistrate for their defence.

Ans. God is the good man's keeper; but how? not immediately, (in an ordinary way,) but mediately. As trust in God doth not consist with trust in means, neither without use of means where God doth afford them; for then Christ might have taken the devil's counsel, and have thrown himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, when God had afforded him stairs for his safe going down. Saints are under the shadow of God's wings principally; he is their chief sun and shield, Gen. xvii. 1; but they are under the shadow of the gods' wings subordinately, they are the instrumental shields of the earth, Ps. xlvii. 9.

God can, in regard of his absolute power, protect his people, without the shields of the earth, against all the opposition from men, as he can defend immediately from all the fiery darts of the devil without the shield of faith or the sword of the Spirit. He needeth not the agency either of magistrates in civil things, nor ministers in spiritual things, but he hath ordained both. It is his pleasure that both should, in subordination to him, be used; and therefore neither can, without sinning against him, be neglected.

Obj. 5. Say they, We may not avenge ourselves; we must not render evil for evil, but overcome evil with good, Rom. xiii.

Ans. Though a Christian must rather suffer than offer injuries, yet he may, nay must, mind his own safety. He may not unjustly offend his brother, but he may justly defend himself.

All private revenge is forbidden, but the magistrate is God's minister;[1] therefore, as vengeance belongeth unto God, so the magistrate may in God's place take revenge, and one may implore his help, as he may commit his cause to God, so it be not done with a revengeful mind.

The meaning of the holy Scriptures is far different from the

[1] R. Willet in Rom. xiii.

sense which the apostate Julian put on them. When he had taken away their estates, he put them off with a mock—your master said, blessed are the poor; and when he had sorely beaten them with his hands, he would wound them with his tongue, saying, your master said, if one beat you on one cheek, turn to him the other. The gospel certainly was never intended for a cross, but a comfort to a Christian; and though its principal aim be to further him spiritually, yet it never designed to hinder him corporally by any of those commands. Christ is more tender of his people than to thrust them into the world, like sheep among ravenous wolves, and to deny them leave of calling to those civil shepherds to take care of them.[1] God hath for that end appointed magistrates to be nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the children of God; to be as tender of them, as provident for them, as helpful to them as parents to their children, as nurses to their babes. They are set up by God himself to be a wall upon which the weak ivy of the church may lean, and by which it may be supported.

Thus we see that piety is not opposite to authority, though that false surmise, that Christians were enemies to the policy and government of kingdoms, was the cause of several of the persecutions in the primitive times. And indeed the devil and his agents suggest to princes so much, to alienate their affections from religious persons.[2] But though some monstrous bodies have brought forth such an hideous birth—that religion denieth all rule—yet you see how far the gospel is from being the father of such a child, when it commandeth lawful obedience to infidel magistrates. It establisheth the first table, and surely doth not abolish the second. And Calvin thinks[3] that, lest believers should think themselves free from that yoke, Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans to inform them of the contrary; for it is very strange to conjecture that that God, which is the God of order in the churches, should be a God of confusion in the commonwealth. No, but the original of this error is man's corrupt nature, which hateth enclosures and banks, and would have all common and level, that he might run to excess of riot without any rubs or hindrances; and thence it is that, like waters stopped at a bridge, he roareth and maketh such a noise. As the mad dog is enraged because of the chain that tieth him, and the unruly horse foameth and fretteth because of the bridle that curbeth him, so

[1] Magistratus necessarius ecclesiæ, quia a Deo ordinatus est ad defensionem ecclesiæ.—*Polan. Syntag.*, lib. vii. cap. 19.

[2] Herding accused, though falsely, Luther to have animated Muncer, the rebel-preacher, in Thuringia.

[3] Calvin in Rom.

these men, mad upon lust, cannot endure to be chained by laws; these furious horses would have the reins on their own necks.

Secondly, Those that in their practices contemn magistracy, sin against this truth discovered in the text; for they despise an ordinance of God, Rom. xiii. 2.

Some sin in their words by uncivil, disrespectful language: the corruption of their hearts breaks out of their lips; 'these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominions, (*Κυριότητος καταφρονοῦντες*, they opposed not so much the officers as the office, not so much the magistrate as magistracy,) speak evil of dignities,' Jude 8; they blaspheme glories.[1] It is blasphemy against the second table. Our wicked times are a woeful comment on that text. Those persons and places which are honoured by the Spirit of God with glorious titles, are bespattered by them with dirty, disgraceful language. Because they could not by the power of their hands displace the magistrate, therefore with the poison of their tongues they did disgrace magistracy.

These men begin to speak evil of the gods, and ordinarily end in speaking evil of God himself; as Aretine, by libellous and contumelious speaking against princes, came at length to disesteem God himself.

Observe how express the command of God is: 'Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor speak evil of the rulers of thy people,' Exod. xxii. 28. This text is quoted by Paul, Acts xxiii. 2, 3, 5, where he called the high priest whited wall, and afterwards said, he wist not that he was the high priest, which words are very much controverted by expositors.[2] Some think he spake ironically, because he saw nothing in him worthy of that office, and because the priesthood was now determined in Christ, he did usurp that office which did not belong to him; and probably he was some surrogate brought in, through the disorder of the times, by some sinister practices.[3] Others, and that to me more likely, expound it thus: I wist not, I considered not, I heeded not, in my haste, in heat I took not sufficient notice, but termed him whited wall, which words, I acknowledge, might well have been spared. The opinion of Junius is, that Paul did not know him to be the high priest; and therefore pleadeth his ignorance as, at least, an extenuation of his offence.[4] But whatever the sense of the words is, this is clear, that

[1] *Βλασφημοῦσι δοξὰς*, idem valet quod *Βλάπτειν τὴν φήμην*, alterius famam lædere maledictis.

[2] So Deodat. in loc. Calvin.

[3] *Vide* Joseph. Antiq., lib. xx. cap. 3, 5.

[4] Jun. in Parall.

such as revile princes disobey God's precept:[1] thou shalt not revile the gods, nor speak evil of the rulers of thy people; that is, thou shalt not speak evil of them by reproach or calumny, nor wish any evil to them by imprecation or curses.

Nay, the Holy Ghost speaketh the persons guilty of this sin to be impudent, audacious sinners: 2 Pet. ii. 10, 'They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.' As if he had said, If they had feared either God or man, they would not have dared to commit this sin.[2] They were bold sinners indeed that durst spit their venom in the faces of the gods, and with the sword of their mouths adventure upon the mouth of the sword. Oh, to what a height of unholiness are they arrived that bring railing accusations against the gods, when the archangel durst not bring one against the devil! Jude 9. But their tongues are set fire on hell, James iii. 6; therefore no wonder if they are set against heaven, Ps. lxxiii. 9. 'Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked; and to princes, Ye are ungodly?'[3] Job xxxiv. 18. The interrogation is a strong negation. Kings must be courted with soft and silken language. If Elias and Isaiah do otherwise, they being moved extraordinarily, are no copies for us to write after.

As some sin in their words, by uncivil language, so others in their works, by their unseemly carriage towards the magistrate. Surely the world is near its end, that there are so many dregs appearing, such brutish persons in it, that have not only banished piety, but humanity. They neither reverence the rulers nor honour the ancient. How many are in their principles antiministerial, and in their practices antimagistratical. As Nazianzen observeth of the Arians, they began in blasphemous language against the deity of Christ, but ended in tumultuous carriage against the peace and tranquillity of the commonwealth; they plead for a Christian liberty with their mouths, but the vote of their hearts carrieth it for an antichristian licentiousness.

The time was, when a magistrate came by, the young men that saw him hid themselves, either for reverence of Job's person, or lest they should fail in their respectful behaviour towards him, or lest he should spy somewhat amiss in them, and the aged arose, and stood up, in token of honour, and to shew respect to him, Job xxix.

[1] Seneca saith of Egypt that it was, Loquax et ingeniosa in contumeliam præfectorum provincia: in qua qui vitaverit culpam, non effugit infamiam.

[2] Luther cried Henry the Eighth mercy for his uncivil language, such as that, *Audi, Domine Rex, edocebo te.*

[3] The mother of Artaxerxes, in Plutarch, was wont to say, that they who addressed themselves to princes should use silken words.

8; but now the tide is turned. We are fellow-creatures, say some, and therefore we must be fellow-beasts, taking no notice of, nor shewing any respect to, one more than another. 'But now,' saith Job, 'they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. And now I am their song, yea, their byword. They abhor me, they flee from me, they spit in my face,' Job xxx. 1, 9, 10. So low, indeed, are they whom God hath set on high, through the pride and profaneness of men's hearts. One observeth of the Persians,[1] that when they came into the presence of their prince, they drew their hands into their sleeves, in token of reverence and loyalty. But how many Christians come short of heathen, and that which is saddest of all, under the pretence of religion! But such must know that, by contemning such men, they contemn God. 'They have not rejected thee,' saith God to Samuel, 'but they have rejected me,' 1 Sam. viii. 7: not so much thee, who art but my minister, as myself, who, being their supreme Lord, do rule by thee as my deputy. As magistracy is God's ordinance, by despising this order, which is by divine appointment, they despise its author: as magistrates are the resemblance of his glory, God's glories, by contemning the picture, they contemn the person; and they that thus dishonour God shall be lightly esteemed by him. 'They that resist the magistrate shall receive to themselves damnation,' Rom. xiii. 2.

My second use will be by way of exhortation, first, to inferiors. If the God of heaven hath appointed magistrates to be as gods on earth, it exhorteth us to honour them:[2] 'Honour the king,' 1 Pet. ii. 17, saith the Holy Ghost; 'Honour to whom honour belongeth,' Rom. xiii. 7. There is honour due to our civil as well as to our natural parents; so much is expressed in that standing law of God, the fifth commandment, Exod. xx. Though they are to be honoured as gods, yet not as the true God; civil respect is due to them, not divine.[3] Yet some Roman emperors, out of intolerable pride, have affected to be called gods, and commanded others to sacrifice to them. This civil honour is to be visible—

1. In giving reverence to their persons.
2. In yielding obedience to their righteous precepts.

First, In reverencing their persons. Magistrates are honoured by God, and therefore may well be honoured by us.

Those who are dignified by God must not be debased by men.

[1] Xenoph. Hellen., lib. xi.

[2] Magistrates are *patres patriæ*.

[3] Prohibiti sunt maledici, non jussi sunt sacrificiis honorari.—*Aug. in Exod.*

We ought to honour them in our hearts, by standing in awe of them, by esteeming them, as they resemble God, Prov. xxiv. 21, and are in his place, to be higher and worthier than others.[1] 'Thou art worth ten thousand of us,' say they to David, 2 Sam. xviii. 3. The godly people counted king Josiah the breath of their nostrils, Lam. iv. 20; and the Holy Ghost brandeth them for sons of Belial that despised Saul in their hearts, though he were a wicked king, 1 Sam. x. 27. In our carriage we must honour them by rising up to them, Job xxix. 8, by bowing the body to them, 2 Sam. xxiv. 20, by silence when they speak, Job xxix. 9, 10.

Honour is an outward signification of that inward reverent opinion which we have of them for their dignity and greatness.

They are honoured in our speeches. The patriarchs call Joseph their lord, Gen. xlii. 10, and themselves his servants, ver. 19. Paul calleth, Acts xxvi. 25, Most noble Festus. Esther v. 8, 'If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request,' saith holy Esther to the heathen king.

It is reported of the great-grandfather of Fabius Maximus,[2] that though he had been five times consul, and had obtained many triumphs for divers honourable victories, yet when his own son was consul, he willingly submitted himself to him, served under him as his lieutenant, and followed on horseback his son in his triumphing chariot. But such heathen will rise up in judgment against many Christians.

Secondly, Your honouring them must appear by your yielding obedience to their lawful precepts.[3] In the kingdom of Christ this is wonderful, saith Zanchy,[4] that he willeth and commandeth all princes and potentates to be subject to his kingdom, and yet he willeth and commandeth that his kingdom be subject to princes and potentates: Tit. iii. 1, 'Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates.' Subjection notes their acknowledgment of obedience to be due, and obedience notes the act itself of obeying, or the practice answerable to the forementioned principle. By principalities are meant those that have the supreme power, as kings or chief magistrates. Powers signify such as exercise delegated authority, and hold from those

[1] Honor est agnitio dignitatis vel excellentiæ illius quæ est in alio, cum ejusdem debita testificatione. Agnitio simul dicitur et testificatio, quia neque in externa observantia sola neque in interna consistit, sed in utroque.—*Ames. Med.*

[2] Plutarch, in Vit. Fab. Max.

[3] Mallem obedire quam miracula facere.—*Luth.*

[4] Zanch. Miscel., epi. ded.

higher powers, as presidents of provinces, lieutenants of counties, judges, justices, mayors, &c. Now, put them in remembrance. Men are apt to be forgetful both of obedience to God and the gods. Naturally we are so proud and high, that we are unwilling to stoop to those that are higher; and therefore we had need to be put in mind of our duties, to 'submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him,' 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. Good rulers we must obey, saith one, as God; bad, for God.

But take notice, I say, magistrates must be obeyed in their lawful commands.[1] If a king, saith our civil law, giveth laws out of his own territories, he is not to be obeyed; and if magistrates command what God forbiddeth, they give laws out of their own dominions, and therefore, saith the divine law, they are not to be obeyed. God indeed is to be obeyed universally and unlimitedly, *intuitu voluntatis*, upon the bare sight of his will; but I must examine the laws of men by the laws of God, and if they are dissonant and disagreeing to God's laws, I must be disobedient to their laws. No mere man's *ipse dixit* is sufficient: Acts v. 29, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' The men of Calicot, say some, will do whatsoever their emperors command, though it be to worship the devil, as some write they do. But we must observe the order of commands: 'Fear God,' is before 'honour the king,' 1 Pet. ii. 17; and again, 'My son, fear the Lord and the king,' Prov. xxiv. 21; and Eccles. viii. 2, 'My son, keep the king's command, and that because of the oath of God,' which latter words, 'and that because of the oath of God,'[2] are not only a reason, but, as is excellently observed, a limitation to the precedent exhortation. They are a reason or enforcement. It is necessary to give obedience to magistrates, not only out of fear towards them, because of their sword, but out of conscience towards God, because of his vows that are upon us, Rom. xiii. 5; and so it seems to relate to some covenant and oath of fidelity which was taken by the people towards their princes, 1 Chron. xi. 3; Isa. xix. 18. And surely oaths to magistrates are to be kept, though some slip oaths as easily as the monkeys do their collars, and, like the man possessed with the devil, break all those bonds asunder. God will have a time to make inquisition for perjury, when his roll of curses, ten

[1] Magis obtemperandum est diis, apud quos diutius manendum est, quam hominibus, quibuscum admodum brevi tempore vivendum est.—*Antigon. in Sophoc.*

[2] *Vide* Large Annotat. *in loc.*

yards long and five yards broad, shall rest in the house of him that foreswearetth himself, and destroy it, Zech. v. 2.

But the words may be considered as a limitation: 'Keep the king's command,' but so that thou do not violate thine oath and obedience due to God. Thy fealty to the gods must be such as will consist with thy fidelity to God; for we are bound to God and his service by oath and covenant, 1 Pet. iii. 21; Ps. cxix. 106; and no subordinate obedience must make us forget our obedience to him who is supreme. We must obey rulers, *usque ad aras*, as far as religion will suffer us, and no further. My obedience to man must be regulated by a good conscience towards God, Dan. iii. 16–18; 1 Sam. xxii. 17; Acts v. 29. As a subordinate officer is not to be obeyed when he useth his power against his prince, which he received from his prince, and should have improved for his prince; so neither is a prince to be obeyed when he useth his power against God, which he received from God, and should have improved for God. As we must give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, so we must give unto God the things that are God's, Mat xxii. 21, 22. One observeth that the Greek article is twice repeated when he speaketh of God,[1] more than when he speaketh of Cæsar, to shew that our special care should be to give God his due.[2] It was a noble speech of those worthies, mentioned Dan. iii. 16–18, who were commanded by the king to worship the image which he had set up: 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not worship thy god, nor fall down to the golden image which thou hast set up.' And it was a gallant answer of the Prince of Condee, who being taken prisoner by Charles the Ninth of France, and put to his choice, whether he would go to mass, or be put to death, or suffer perpetual imprisonment. The former, said he, by God's grace I will never do; and for the two latter, let the king do with me what he pleaseth; God, I hope, will turn all to the best.[3]

We are also to honour magistrates, both by praying for them, and paying tribute to them; the former is our duty, and the latter is their due: 'I will, saith the apostle, that prayers and supplications be made for all men, for kings, and all in authority,' 1 Tim.

[1] Τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ.

[2] To pay to the king that tribute which is due to God only, is not *tributum Cæsaris, sed servitium diaboli.—Chrysost.*

[3] Hist. Gall.

ii. 1, 2. The burden which lieth on them is weighty; we had need therefore to beg of God to strengthen their backs, otherwise they can never bear it. There is a truth in that saying, Did men but know the weight of a crown, they would not stoop to take it up.[1] Pride indeed is so prevalent with many persons, that they will venture their lives to satisfy their ambition; these men's great care is to get the sword, the sceptre, not how to use them for God and his people; but certainly they who mind a faithful discharge of their trusts find the magistrate's throne to be a place of little ease. They are shepherds, Isa. xliv. 28, and we know the life of a shepherd is a laborious life; they endure the scorching heat of summer, and the nipping cold of the winter, to keep their flocks safe. Cares and fears about public concernments molest them night and day, as weights hang on a clock, and will not suffer them to sleep. If they watch to protect us, should not we watch unto prayer for them?[2] The emblem of King Henry the Seventh, in all the windows of his house, was still a crown in a bush of thorns, surely to tell us that great places are not free from great cares; that no man knoweth the weight of a sceptre but he that swayeth it.

We are bound likewise to pay tribute to them, as well as pray for them: 'Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute belongeth, custom to whom custom,'[3] Rom. xiii. 7.

It is observable, the Holy Ghost calleth it their due. To pay tribute or custom is not an act of courtesy, but a duty which must be done out of conscience; God commandeth it from us in lieu of the magistrate's care of us:[4] as ver. 6, 'For this cause pay ye tribute, (*præstatis, non datis,* you pay; not, you give,) 'for they are God's ministers,' &c. Your paying tribute and custom is a sign of your subjection to them, and a thankful acknowledgment of your protection from them; and ver. 5, 'For this cause ought you to be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.' God taketh care for the maintenance of the magistrate as well as of the minister, and doth strictly enjoin us, that both they who watch for our souls, and they which watch for our bodies, should have an honourable subsistence. Did such as are private but seriously consider this word conscience, for conscience sake, they durst not, as they do,

[1] Moses was a pious patient man, yet he telleth us, notwithstanding all his strength of grace, *Non possum portare,* I am not able to bear all this people, Num. xi. 14.

[2] B. Hall's contemplation.

[3] *φόρος capitatio,* poll-money which men pay by the poll, or according to their estates; *τέλος, vectigal,* dues for merchandise.—*Beza.*

[4] Pompey first converted the capitation or head silver to the city of Rome.—*Par. in Rom.*

cozen the public.[1] The same mighty possessor of heaven and earth, who giveth me a right to the whole, giveth them a right to a part of my estate, and therefore to cozen them of their dues in tribute or custom, is to cozen and defile my conscience by the violation of God's righteous command.

I shall, in the next place, lay down two or three thoughts to enforce the duty of honouring magistrates.

First, Consider the necessity of magistracy. Without magistracy one man would be but bread for another; and the world, which is like the sea for storms and tempests, would also resemble it in this, that the inhabitants of it would be as the fishes of the sea, the great would devour the small. 'Men are like the fishes of the sea,' saith the prophet, 'that have no ruler over them,' Hab. i. 14. No man could call anything his own, were it not for these gods. Did not they defend us by their power, every one would rob and wrong us at his pleasure. Our liberties, estates, and lives would quickly be a prey to the covetousness and cruelty of vicious persons. Liberty and property are quite banished where authority is not established. Who can express the malice and murders, the rapine and robberies, the mischiefs and miseries that reign where the magistrate doth not reign. 'In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right,' not in God's, 'but in his own eyes,' Judges xvii. 6, and xix. 1. And what evil is not good in his eye who hath the devil for his guide and leader, and corrupt nature for his law and rules? When the gate of magistracy is shut, the flood-gates for all manner of enormities are open. When these that bear up the pillars of the house are removed, how soon will the building be ruined! When God intended the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth, he took away their sanhedrim. And in the glass of our times it is too too visible what a sad deformed face things have when magistrates are overturned. Constantinople will witness to this truth, where, upon the grand signior's death, till his successor be on his throne, all things are in a confusion, and the janizaries have the rule and dominion. Some write that the Persian law commandeth that upon the decease of their kings there should be a suspension of the laws for certain five days, that subjects might know the necessity of government, and learn to value it more by being bereft of the benefit of it for a time. Nay, when God is ex-

[1] Tiberius did not approve that shepherd that flayed his sheep instead of clipping; nor Tully, him who cut the wings, so that they could never grow after. Magistrates are set for the good of the people, and therefore should be moderate in demanding their goods.

ceedingly provoked by sin, how sharply doth he make men suffer by taking away their stay and their staff!—the mighty man, the judge, the prophet, and the prudent, Isa. iii. 1–4. The taking away the civil stay and staff, the prince, and the spiritual stay and staff, the prophet, will quickly cause the fall, yea, the utter downfall of the people. Men often murmur at the magistrate, and tell us, many times falsely, he is a tyrant; if he were gone all would be well; but when he is out of the way, do they not find many tyrants for one? Every man would be an oppressor were there no man to be a restrainer.

What would a nation without government be but a desert of savage beasts; what would towns be but dens of thieves, and what would families be but cages of unclean birds; yea, what would most men be, but like dogs trying all right and title by their teeth and strength?

Men naturally are more afraid of the noise of the musket than of the bullet—I mean of the frowns of the rulers than of the fire of hell; and therefore were they once free from them, they would do that which would soon undo both themselves and others.

Now the necessity of magistrates calleth for reverence and obedience to their authority. The more needful things are, the more grateful they should be. Things that are superfluous may be slighted, things that are only convenient may be the less valued; but things that are absolutely necessary must he highly esteemed. I tell thee, the ministry is not more necessary to the well-being of the church, than the magistracy to the well-being of the state. You may as soon see a tree thrive without a root, as a commonwealth flourish without a ruler. Magistrates are in Scripture called the heads of the people, Exod. xviii. 25, because they are as necessary to the body politic, to direct and govern it, as the head is to the body natural; therefore, as the members yield respect, and are subject unto the head, if the head do but ache, all the humours of the arm, as some observe, run to the head, and therefore the arms are thin and slender, because they want their proper nurture; yea, if the head be in danger, how do the other parts hazard themselves for its shelter! Many a hand and arm hath been wounded that the head might be saved. Thus should subjects shew their respect to, and tenderness of, their superiors; for if a member, or some of the inferior parts, be cut off, the body may live, but if the head be taken off, if governors be set aside, *actum est de republica*, that kingdom, that commonwealth, cannot stand long.

Secondly, Consider the severity of God against the contemners of magistrates. There are several in the word of God that stand up,

like the mast of a ship cast away by sands, to warn us that we steer not their course, lest we be sunk also. Those who opposed the preservers of our civil lives have not seldom been punished with violent deaths; Korah and his company, Abimelech, Athaliah, Adonijah, Absalom, Zimri, Joab, Sheba, with several others, will confirm this truth; and human as well as divine writings speak to the same purpose.

James the First, king of Scots, was murdered in Perth by Walter Earl of Atholl, in hope to attain the crown, for so had his sorcerers prophesied; and crowned he was with a crown of red iron clapped upon his head, being one of the tortures wherewith he ended at once his wicked days and desires.[1] Becket, Mortimer, Tyler, Warbeck, Sanders, Story, Campian, the Piercies, the powder-plotters, Rhodulphus Duke of Suevia, Richard the Third of England, and many others, have been marked with divine vengeance for contemning this divine ordinance.

'My son,' saith Solomon, 'fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change. For their calamity shall arise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both?' Prov. xxi. 22—*i.e.* of them that fear not God, and of them that fear not the king. And Eccles. x. 8, 9, 'He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.' These four proverbial expressions speak the danger of them that go about to supplant their rulers. Whilst they are digging pits to catch others, the earth falleth on them, and murdereth themselves. When they are breaking up the old hedge of government, serpents and adders, which use to harbour in old walls and hedges, will sting them. God will make men know that it is a dangerous thing to confound rule and subjection, and to break down the partition wall which he hath set up between magistrates and people. When these sharp instruments which they run against wound them deep, they will believe that it is bad meddling with edged tools; and that there is a truth in those words of the apostle, 'They that resist procure to themselves damnation,' Rom. xiii. 2—that is, both corporal punishment and eternal torment, saith Peter Martyr.

If thou wouldst not, therefore, suffer with others, take heed of sinning with others. 'Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked persons,' saith Moses to the congregation upon the conspiracy of Korah, Dathan, &c., against their rulers, 'and touch nothing

[1] Speed Chron.

of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins,' Num. xvi. 26. They that join in common rebellions must expect to be joined in common destructions. Be not impatient of rule, as thou desirest to avoid that ruin which God's mouth doth threaten, and his hand will execute on such rebellious ones. Let those many examples, which are in Scripture and other authors mentioned, of them that are hung on gibbets as monuments of God's fury, fright thee from their acts, lest thou partake of their ends. Believe it, no king can possibly be so tender of his own honour as God is of his own officers. Do not, therefore, shoot off thy guns of opposition against the gods, lest they recoil and kill thyself. Reviling of natural parents was banishment by Plato's law, death by God's law, Exod. xxi. 17. Those then that revile civil parents shall not always go unpunished.

Thirdly, Consider thy felicity and welfare doth under God depend much on the gods. The apostle enforceth this use by this very argument:[1] 'For he is the minister of God for thy good,' Rom. xiii. If he labour to do thee good, why shouldst thou imagine evil against him? To render good for evil is God-like, Mat. v. 48, but to render evil for good is devilish.

Magistrates are shields, Ps. xlvii. 9; they defend their subjects from the darts and bullets with which the sons of violence would wound them.

Shepherds, Num. xxvii. 17, to defend them from the devouring mouths of ravenous creatures. They are called the foundations of the earth, because they support the building from ruin and sinking,[2] Prov. x. 25. Coverings, Ezek. xxviii. 16, which importeth that engine, under which soldiers used to be protected, in assaulting the walls of an enemy, against the stones and darts which were thrown down upon them. Guides, Prov. vi. 7, because they lead and direct the people. Angels, 2 Sam. xiv. 15, in that they defend and protect the people.[3] The fathers and mothers of the country, Gen. xli. 43; Judges v. 7, because they take care of, and provide for their people. Healers, Job xxxiv. 17, because they cure their wounds, and make up their breaches. They deliver the poor that crieth, and the fatherless, and him that hath none to help. They are eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; fathers to the poor, and helpers to the needy, Job xxix. 11-15. They are born not for

[1] Martial policy, true religion, and civil justice, are the three pillars which uphold all, saith Sir Walter Raleigh.

[2] Βασιλέυς *quasi* βάσις τοῦ λαοῦ.

[3] Αναξ *ab ἄνος medela.*

themselves, but for the good of many, as Bucer's physician told him.[1] And they govern not seeking their own wealth, but the commonwealth,[2] as Ælius Adrianus, emperor of Rome, would say. They are as trees whose leaves are fair, whose fruit much, and in them is meat for all; in their shadow the beasts of the field dwell, and in them the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, Dan. iv. 12, 21.

They are the keepers of our liberties, the preservers of our lives, the safety of our persons, the security of our possessions, the terrors of sinners, the defence of saints, the nerves and sinews, yea, the vital spirits of the body politic, without whom all things would run to ruin, and quickly fall to confusion. How much then do they for us, and how much then should we be subject to them! Surely, as little as many value them, they will find much cause to celebrate the funerals of these civil fathers with many tears. Our comforts as well as our consciences call upon us to be subject. To wish them harm that watch to be our helps is horrid ingratitude. Cicero saith, he that killeth his father committeth many sins in one, because he sinneth against many obligations. His father begat him, nourished him, brought him up. Magistrates are the fathers of their country; he that resisteth them, or doth violence to them, committeth several sins in one, because he sinneth against so many engagements to subjection. We owe all the comforts we enjoy for this world, nay, somewhat of them that relate to a better world, under God, to the magistrate. We could not sleep quietly in our beds one night, we could not eat one meal peaceably in the day without them; we could not call either children, or estates, or lives our own without them; we could not enjoy such liberties for our souls, such frequent communion of saints without them. How great then is our obligation, and how great should our subjection be to them! These many cords of kindness should bind us to them. He was possessed with a devil whom no cords would hold, Mark v. 3; and surely they are little better, that, against the law of God, and this protecting love of the gods, will not learn to be loyal.

Trees receive moisture from the earth, and within a while pay it back in those leaves that fall to the earth again; the rivers receive their waters from the ocean, and they acknowledge it in emptying themselves into it; sheep that are fed by us acknowledge it in serving us with their flesh and fleeces. And shall man be more brutish

[1] Non sibi sed multorum utilitati se esse natum.

[2] Non mihi sed populo, signifying that which he was often heard to say, Ita se rempublicam gesturum, ut sciret rem populi esse, non suam.

than the beast? I shall end this exhortation with the words of the Holy Ghost a little varied: 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your bodies, as ministers for your soul, as they that must give an account,' Heb. xiii. 17.

My second exhortation will be to the gods. If the God of heaven have appointed you to be gods on earth, then it may exhort you to walk as gods, and to work as gods amongst men.

First, walk as gods among men; your calling is high, and therefore your carriage should be holy. Every calling hath a peculiar comeliness belonging to it. A courtier hath another manner of behaviour than a country man, a scholar than a scullion, a prince than a peasant. The greater your privileges are, the more gracious your practices should be. Remember whose livery you wear, whose image you bear, whose person you represent, whose place you stand in, and walk worthy of that calling whereunto you are called, Eph. iv. 1. Some would have us give no names to children, but such as should mind them of their duty. The Spirit of God hath given you a divine name, which should mind you of the divine nature. Since your compellations are according to God, surely your conversations should be according to the gospel.

The several titles given to you call for sanctity and strictness from you.

The Spirit of God calleth you kings, 1 Sam. viii. 9, and princes, Josh. viii. 33. Now, is it seemly or suitable, to see kings or princes paddling in the mire, or playing in the dirt with every beggar's brat? Doth not every one expect that their linen should be in print, their clothes clean without the least spot of dirt? And is it comely or consonant to see magistrates, honoured with a commission from heaven, wallowing in the mire of sin and pollution with every heir of hell? Do not all expect that, as your places are god-like and honourable, so your practice should be godly and answerable, that your linen should be white, your garments undefiled, and your persons higher than others, not only in place, but piety?

When King Porus was taken prisoner, and demanded by the conqueror how he would be used? he answered, Like a king; and being three times asked the same question, he as often returned the same answer. And if you ask me how you should demean yourselves, I would answer, Like kings, every one resembling the behaviour of a king. Prov. xxxi. 3, 4, 'It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor princes strong drink, lest they drink

and forget the law.[1] Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.' Drunkenness and uncleanness are sinful and unwarrantable in subjects, but they are most sordid and abominable in a sovereign. They are so much worse than others, by how much they ought to be better than others.[2] A disease that surpriseth the head or heart is more dangerous than those that infect the exterior members. A spot in silk is far worse than one in sackcloth. A fly in a barrel of pitch doth not the harm which it doth in a box of ointments.

When Scipio was offered a harlot, he said, *Vellem si non essem Imperator*, I would if I were not a general, an emperor. Should such a man as I fly? said Nehemiah. So should a ruler consider, should such a man as I be unclean? I, that punish such sin in others, should I commit it myself? Should such a man as I swear, be lascivious in my language, or unsavoury in my speeches? A divine sentence is in the mouth of a king, Prov. xvi. 10. I, whose words are laws and oracles, should speak as the oracles of God, 1 Peter iv. 11. Should such a man as I profane the Sabbath, associate with sinners, be prayerless in my family, or venture upon any iniquity? It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, Prov. xvi. 12. Peter Martyr told Queen Elizabeth, that princes were doubly bound to God,—as men, and as princes or chief men. Their sins are sins against more obligations, and therefore are sins of more aggravations than others. A great man cannot commit a small sin; yet a great man is seldom a good man. Godliness in a ruler is like a diamond in a golden ring, which shines radiantly; but there are few jewels so set. Among all the kings of Israel, not one godly man; among the kings of Judah, very few. Men in high places are apt to have their heads giddy, and thereby are in great danger of falling.[3] Of only one Roman emperor (Titus) is it said that he was the better for his honour; most are worse.

The Spirit of God calleth you the children of God, and all of you are children of the Most High. Now, how exactly, how circumspectly should the children of God walk! Much obedience may be expected from servants, but more from sons; their preeminence is more, and therefore their obedience should be more.

[1] Of Bonosus the emperor it was said, he was born *non ut vivat, sed ut bibat.* And when being overcome by Probus, he hanged himself; it was commonly jested, that a tankard hung there, not a man.

[2] Ideo deteriores sumus quia meliores esse debemus.—*Salv.*

[3] Pope Urban wrote to a prelate in his time scoffingly, *Monacho fervido, Abbati calido, Episcopo tepido, et Archiepiscopo frigido;* still the higher in means, the worse in manners.

The fathers of the flesh look for much dutifulness from their children; but surely the Father of spirits may look for more from his children, Phil. ii. 15: 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.' Ye that are God's sons, are appointed to blame others that do evil, and therefore it behoveth you to be blameless yourselves, *Qui alterum accusat probri*, &c., but blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke. The sons of great men should be without riotousness or rebellion; but the sons of God should be without suspicion or rebuke; that is, walk so strictly as that they should do nothing blameworthy. If God be your Father, where is his honour? Mal. i. 6. Do you honour him in your hearts, by giving him your superlative love, and fear, and trust, and esteem? Do you honour him in your houses, by causing all within your charges to worship him according to his word? Are your houses houses of holiness—praying, reading, singing, catechising houses? are they examples of religion to your neighbours? Is holiness to the Lord written upon yourselves, your children, your servants, your estates, and upon all that belong to you? Do you honour God in your lives, by walking as he walked? Are ye followers of him as dear children? Eph. v. 1. Do you resemble him as children their father? Are you holy as he was holy in all manner of conversation? Was your everlasting Father, when he walked in your flesh upon earth, ever guilty of cursing, or swearing, or lying? Did any rotten communication ever drivel out of his lips? Was he ever guilty of oppressing the poor, or despising the needy? of seeking himself, or of doing his own will? Did he ever neglect praying, and instructing his family of the apostles, or supplication by himself? Was not he at prayer early in the morning, a great while before day, and was not he up at it all night? Was it not his meat and drink to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work? Did not he go about doing good, glorifying God upon earth, and doing what was well pleasing in his sight? Surely ye that are the sons of God by name and office, should resemble the Son of God by nature.

O sirs, think of it; ye that are the sons of God by deputation, should resemble this Son of God by generation. Be not as Eli's, and Samuel's, and David's children, a disgrace to your Father: but as Constantine's sons resembled their father in his good parts and practices,[1] so be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect, Mat. v. 48. David's daughters were known to be his children by their

[1] Euseb.

garments, 2 Sam. xiii. 18. Do you make it known to others that you are the children of God, by not defiling your garments; by keeping yourselves unspotted from the world; by looking to your clothes that they be not defiled, though ye walk in dirty streets; be as the children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Consider, the devil is ever watching for your halting, and, like some unkind servant, he blabs presently to the Father what a dirty pickle his children are in. Suppose he seeth the dirt of drunkenness, of uncleanness, of squeezing tenants, of profaning the Sabbath, of scoffing at godliness, of irreligion and atheism in your houses, and immediately carries your clothes to God, as the patriarchs did Joseph's coat—for he accuseth men before God day and night, Rev. xii. 1—saying, Lord, is this thy son's coat? Know now whether it be thy son's coat or no, Gen. xxxvii. 32. Do thy children use to carry themselves as my children? Surely these are of their father the devil. Can you imagine that God should own you? No, certainly—as the pope disowned the bishop, when the emperor had sent the buff-coat in which he was taken prisoner, and delivered him up to justice—he will not dishonour himself by owning you. Nay, how can you expect but that Jesus Christ, who sitteth by and heareth the indictment against you—who useth to appear as an advocate for others, when the accuser of the brethren pleadeth against them—should even second the bill against you, and say to God, as Moses, Deut. xxxii. 5, they have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of God's children, they are perverse and crooked persons. Father, these are sins, not of weakness, but wickedness; they are not infirmities, but enormities; they are not the spots of thy children. Those that cast thee out of their hearts, and let the flesh have the supremacy there; that cast thee out of their houses, and let the world have the superiority there; those that make no conscience of thy day and their duties; whose whole care is to be honoured and enriched; whose heat and fervour is for credit and profit, and put thee off with a few fragments of time, and a few scraps of their estate, which they can spare from the world and flesh; those sin like wretches, like rebels—not like saints, like sons; their spots are not the spots of thy children.

There are spots which may be, and spots which cannot be, the spots of God's children. All sins are unsuitable to, but some sins are inconsistent with, sonship; yea, the pre-eminence of adoption doth absolutely deny the predominancy of any corruption.

When Antigonus was to go to a place that might probably prove

a temptation to sin, he asked counsel of Menedemus what he should do. He bade him only remember he was a king's son; so say I to you, that walk every day in the midst of many snares of temptations, and therefore should have the greater care and circumspection. Remember that ye are the sons of the King of kings, and do nothing unworthy of the name by which he calleth you, or the place to which he hath called you.

It might have been a cutting word to the heart of Brutus, whose hand was then stabbing Cæsar, What, thou my son Brutus! I could not have expected better from a slave, but little looked for this from a son. How, think you, can the Lord take it, that you who are his children should wound the body of his Son with oaths and curses, his sacred laws by wickedness and wilful disobedience? I beseech you be exceeding holy, that ye may shew yourselves to be children of the Most High. 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: he that doeth not righteousness is not of God,' 1 John iii. 10. 'If ye therefore call on the Father, who without respect of persons will judge every man according to his works, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,' 1 Pet. i. 17, 'forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold, from your vain conversations received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish,' ver. 18, 19. It is written of Boleslaus, one of the kings of Poland, that he still carried about with him the picture of his father, and when he was to do any great work he would look on the picture and pray that he might do nothing unworthy of such a father's name; so when you set about any business, desire and labour that you may do nothing, while on earth, unworthy your Father who is in heaven.

Nay, further, the Holy Ghost calleth you gods. How godly, then, should you be; how unsuitable are the works of the devil to them that have the name of god! God is light, and in him is no darkness at all; and should not the gods shine brightly with the light of holiness, and abhor all deeds of darkness? The gods of the heathen were taxed with several crimes: Jupiter with uncleanness, Juno with passion, &c. Hence, saith Austin, the heathen took liberty to sin, because their gods were represented to them as patterns or approvers of such actions. As Charæa in Terence, *non ego facerem quæ Jupiter fecit?* Should I be backward to what the god himself was forward? But the God of heaven is far from such things; he is the Holy One of Israel, holy in all his ways, and

righteous in all his works; his nature is the pattern of holiness; his law is the rule of holiness; holiness is his essence, his glory, himself, Ps. lxxxix. 13. 'A God of truth without iniquity, just and right is he,' Deut. xxxii. 4. There are many spots in our moons, but not the least spot in the Sun of righteousness. Now, therefore, you that have his name should get his nature, and be pure as he is pure: the name of God is an honour to you, O be not you a dishonour to it, James ii. 8. Do not, O do not, blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called. How holy should you be in your hearts, how watchful over your words, how wary in your works, how faithful in your families, how conscientious in all companies, for the Most High hath said, Ye are gods.[1]

Alexander having a soldier of his name that was a coward, bade him either learn to be valiant, or be no more called Alexander: so say I to you that have the livery and name of God, and do the drudgery of Satan; either learn to be holy, to be good, or be no more called gods.

Sir, observe it, is it comely for a god to swear? for a god to wrong his neighbours? for a god to profane God's day? for a god to despise godliness and godly men? for a god to keep company with those that are of their father the devil? for a god to live without God in his affections, house, and conversation? Blush, O guilty justice or ruler, and be ashamed, and either amend thy life and nature, or disown this name of god.

I have sometime read of Luther, that he used to repel the darts of temptations with this shield, I am a Christian, I cannot do it. Oh would you but think, when your hearts or lives are swerving from God, I am called a god, and cannot, may not do the work of the devil. I may not do anything unworthy the name of god; it might be helpful to you against the assaults of hell.

Besides, you had the more need to walk in the way of God's commandments, because you have many following your steps:[2] they that have many at their heels had need to be holy, lest they cause the souls of others as well as their own to miscarry for ever. Sin, especially in great men, is like leaven, which soureth the whole lump, 1 Cor. v. 6.

The bodies of men do not sooner take infection than their souls. If the great trees fall, they usually brush and beat down smaller ones with them. When two or three men of renown, famous in

[1] Lactantius telleth us that the very heathen thought that their only way to honour their gods was to be like them, to do as they did.

[2] Nemo errat sibi ipsi, sed dementiam spargit in proximos.—*Sen.*, ep. 94.

the congregation, begin a mutiny against God, they shall not want company to join with them, Num. xvi. If the princes of the people be guilty of rebellion, how soon is the whole congregation in the same transgression, Num. xiii. 28, 29 ; Num. xiv. *init.* When a disease hath once taken the head, how often doth it thence diffuse itself into other parts of the body. When Charles V. went into Italy to be crowned emperor, being troubled with the headache, he cut his hair short, the great courtiers followed his example, so as long hair, so much in fashion before, grew quite out of fashion in his time. Alexander used to carry his head on one side, whereupon his courtiers to imitate him did the like. Before Vespasian's time the Romans were grown to great excess in clothes and furniture for their houses ; and though many laws were made against it, they could not be restrained ; but when he came to the crown, being a temperate and moderate prince, all their former vanity grew out of use. So true is that saying of king Alphonsus, that as certain flowers move after the sun, so the people follow the manners of their princes : and certain it is that the common sort, like a flock of sheep, which way the first goeth all the rest follow.

The actions of rulers are often the rulers of the people's actions. The vulgar are like soft wax, taking any and easy impression from the seals of great men. When men of quality swear, roar, deride religion, dwell without God in their houses, &c., how quickly do their neighbours take after them, and justify their practices by such patterns, thinking they sin *cum privilegio*, if they sin *cum principe*. But now, if a great man walk with God, condemn and reprove sin by his works as well as by words, (being, as the chief magistrate of Israel was, mighty in word and deed, Acts vii. 22,) if he pray with his family, keep the Lord's day strictly, work out his salvation diligently, how prevalent will such an example be to the inferior people ! Surely as when the mountains overflow with water, the valleys are much the better ; so when these mountains (as rulers are called, Micah vi. 2) overflow with the water of grace, the plains will abound the more in fruit.

Think, therefore, how comfortable it will be for thee, by thy holy life, to direct others in the way to heaven ; and how lamentable will it one day be to thee shouldst thou lead others in the road to hell ! How deep wilt thou sink into hell, that shalt be pressed down under the weight of thy own and thine other men's sins ! I remember Luther mentioneth this to be one of the papists' tenets,[1]

[1] Hain. in Vit. Lutheri.

that if the pope be so neglectful of his own and his brethren's salvation, and so unprofitable and remiss in his place, that he carries along with himself innumerable people to be eternally tormented, no mortal man ought to reprove him for this sin. But sure I am, the immortal God will reprove both him and you for such crimes when ye shall meet in the other world, where the weight of sin will be sufficiently felt, and the worth of the soul, which is destroyed by it, shall be fully known.

Further, It behoveth you the rather to walk as gods, because others do not only sin with you, but suffer for you. When king David numbered the people out of pride, how did God number the people to the pestilence! 2 Sam. xxiv. What bitter fruits doth God make Israel to feed on: Jer. xv. 2, 'Such as are for death to death, such as are for famine to famine, such as are for the sword to the sword!' But if you would know the root from which those sour fruits spring: 'Because of Manasseh the king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem,' ver. 4.

Whether, saith one, a gangrene begin at the head or the heel, it will kill; but a gangrene in the head will kill sooner than one in the heel. Even so will the sins of great ones overthrow a state sooner than the sins of small ones; therefore the advice of Sigismund the emperor, when a motion was made for reformation, was, Let us begin at the minorities, saith one. No: rather, saith he, let us begin at the majorities; for if the great ones be good, the meaner cannot easily be evil.

Secondly, It exhorteth you to work as gods.

I shall branch this use into three particulars.

1. Execute justice impartially.
2. Excel in shewing mercy.
3. Promote piety to the utmost of your power.

First, Execute justice impartially. God is a God of justice and judgment, Isa. xxx. 18; the most just, Job xxxiv. 17. Others *may* do justly, he *cannot but* do justly. Justice, which is an accident in others, and therefore may be separated from them, is his very essence, his being. Be ye therefore like God. Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream. Wear the same garments which he doth: Isa. lix. 17, 'He putteth on righteousness for a breastplate, and the helmet of salvation upon his head.' Such garments did holy Job wear: 'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, my judgment was as a robe and a diadem,' Job xxix. 14. Kings and princes wear crowns and diadems, judges and other officers wear robes and other ornaments.

Now, saith Job, others place much of their glory and state in their robes, in their purple vestments, which strike a reverence in the subject toward his superior, adding, in the estimation of men, majesty to the person, and solemnity to the action of the wearer; but I place my honour in justice and judgment. I think myself better clothed with these real virtues, than others with their empty marks and ensigns of dignity.

I say, execute justice impartially; that is, without fear or favour:[1] 'Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty,' Lev. xix. 15; as if he had said, Ye cannot deal righteously if ye spare any because he is poor, or because he is rich. It is a principle in moral policy, that an ill executor of the laws is worse in a state than a great breaker of them; and the Egyptian kings presented the oath to their judges, not to swerve from their consciences, though they received a command from themselves to the contrary. Neither fear of greatness,—It is a mercy to have judges, saith Cicero, *modo audeant quæ sentiunt*—nor favour of nearness, should make magistrates deviate from the rule. When Charicles, the son-in-law of Phocion, was accused for taking bribes, he desired his father to defend his cause; but he answered him, I took thee for my son-in-law in all honest matters only. A magistrate should be a heart without affection, an eye without lust, a mind without passion, or otherwise his hand will do unrighteous actions. He that goeth to the seat of judicature must leave his affections, as Abraham his servants when he went to the mount, behind him. A justice must, like the earth, cherish and nourish the low violet as well as the tall cedar. The Grecians placed Justice betwixt Leo and Libra, thereby signifying that there ought to be both magnanimity in executing and indifferency in determining. But the impartiality of a ruler is notably set out by the throne of the house of David, Ps. cxxii. 5, which was placed in the gate of the city towards the sun-rising, as some observe. In the gate, to tell us that all who went in and came out at the gate might indifferently be heard, and have free access to the judgment-seat; but towards the rising of the sun, to shew that their judgment should be as clear from corruption as the sun is clear in his chiefest brightness.

It would be an ornament unto, and tend to the settlement of magistracy, for the throne is established by righteousness, Prov.

[1] It was a strange yet true saying, there was more justice in hell than in France; there the guilty are punished, be they never so great; they do not escape; but in France it is otherwise. May it not be said so of England?

xvi. 12, if those two verses, which some say are written in letters of gold over the tribunal in Zant, were practised by every court of justice:

'Hic locus odit, amat, punit, conservat, honorat,
Nequitiam, pacem, crimina, jura, bonos.'

In the executing of justice, there are two things mainly to be minded.

1. That you be terrors to evil-doers: this is expressed as one of your chief duties, Rom. xiii. 3. If men be fearless in sinning, surely you should not be fearful in sentencing them for their sins. God hateth iniquity; he is of purer eyes than to behold it; the evil of sin never got a good look from God, and why should it from the gods? Edward the Confessor was held a bad prince, not by doing, but enduring evil.[1] God was angry with Eli, and telleth him that he would judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not, 1 Sam. iii. 13. Eli was a magistrate, and should have put forth his authority and punished those ungodly children; but because he did not, God punished both him and them. Oh it is dangerous to do the work of the Lord negligently. Sir, do not you, or might you not, upon inquiry, know of them that profane God's day, blaspheme his name, frequent alehouses and the like? Do you restrain them? Do you fright such offenders with your frowns, and shew your love to their souls by executing justice on them for their sins? If you do not, look to yourself, for God hath iron hands for justices that have leaden heels, and will one day strike them home, for forswearing themselves to spare others. He will be a terror to thee, and make thee a terror to thyself, who wilt not at his command be a terror to evil-doers.[2] Thou sinnest in others whilst thou sufferest them to sin, and thou shalt one day suffer with them, Rev. xviii. 4. Thou art afraid to offend thy neighbours; I tell thee, God will make thee know it were better offending all the world than one God. I beseech you, make it appear that you are magistrates by being men of courage; be as bold in executing as others are in transgressing the law. Shall iniquity be brazen-faced, and authority hide itself? If the offender be in robes, be not afraid of him, but make him afraid of you. I have read that the Athenian judges sat in Mars Street, to shew that rulers should be men of valour. Cowards are more fit to be slaves than rulers. A

[1] Dan. Hist.

[2] Our old word *Koning*, and by contraction *King*, comes of *Con*, saith Becanus, and comprehendeth three things: Possum, Scio, Audeo.

magistrate should be like Moses: in his own cause as meek as a lamb, in God's cause as stiff as an oak, as bold as a lion. All dare disparage him who dareth discourage none. How punctually doth Scripture tell you that this ought to be your practice! Magistrates, saith Peter, are sent for the punishment of evil-doers, 1 Pet. ii. 14. And Paul saith, 'If thou doest evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath on them that do evil,' Rom. xiii. 4. The sword which is carried before him, as an ensign of his power, is not for show or for fashion, but for the wounding disorderly persons. 'A wise king,' saith Solomon, Prov. xx. 26, 'scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them;' a kind of punishment then in use, and now in many places. Especially be severe to them that profane the Sabbath, that queen of days, that golden season of grace. Nehemiah would not spare the chief men that profaned this chiefest of days, chap. xiii. 17. This is one of the chief precepts which the Lord of the Sabbath commandeth you, Exod. xx., xxiii. 12. England's disturbing God's rest hath raised God to disturb England's rest.

He that spareth the bad hurteth the good. The chirurgeon must cut off incurable members, and the physician of the state must purge out the peccant humours of the body politic, lest they infect and injure the whole. The execution of justice is like a clap of thunder, which striketh few, but frighteth many. 'Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware,'[1] Prov. xix. 25. Thus by not punishing the evil, both the good and bad are, though unjustly, punished; yet the greatest injury is to the ruler, by the offender's impunity; for besides the guilt which he contracts on his soul, and thereby God's eternal wrath, he is oftentimes punished in his body, and made an example of God's justice to others. When the French king, Henry IV., was persuaded by the Duke of Sully to banish that generation of vipers, the Jesuits, he would not, saying, Give me security then for my life. But he was shortly after stabbed to death by their instigation. God doth not seldom make them examples of his judgments, that will not make others examples of justice.

Secondly, That you be protectors of them that do well. The Holy Ghost telleth you that you should be for the praise of them that do well. Courts of justice should be cities of refuge to them that are unjustly and causelessly pursued. Like Noah's ark, to take in and give rest to those weary doves. Like the horns of the

[1] Pœna ad unum, timor ad omnes.

altar, to which innocency should fly for protection. 'Mine eyes, saith David, 'shall be upon the faithful in the land,' Ps. ci. 6. Hide the godly especially under the shadow of your wings. Piety hath too much been bespattered with obloquy, and holiness suffered under the name of baseness. *Mali esse coguntur ne viles habeantur*,[1] Men have been necessitated to be vicious, lest they should be accounted vile. Be you not only patterns, but patrons of purity. Let the world know that greatness can own and countenance goodness. The kings of Gerar were called Abimelech, which signifieth My father, Gen. xxx. 2, noting that a king should be as careful and mindful, as tender and chary of his subjects, especially good ones, as fathers of their children. Alas, if the magistrates will not own them, what shall the godly do? The devil raiseth all the train-bands of hell against them that march to heaven. The world loveth its own, but because they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them, their neighbours malign them, and rage, because they dare not run to the same excess of riot. The whole parish, if occasion be, will be gathered together against those that are pious, especially if they be zealous for God's glory, against others' impieties. Now, since God hath set you up for their shelter, surely you are concerned to secure them in times of danger. Sure I am that it is a privilege and honour to you, that you may be serviceable to the people of God. God carrieth them upon eagles' wings, Exod. xix. 4, as tenderly as the eagle her young ones, of which some observe, she carrieth her prey between her talons, but her young under her wings; and if a fowler shoot at her, she will first have her own body shot through before they shall be hurt. God is therefore called their shield, Gen. xvii. 1. Now a shield is between the body and the weapon. Look, therefore, that you imitate God in this. Remember that men were not made for you, but you were made for them; God took David from the sheepfold to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance, Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71.

It was said by Nazianzen of Athanasius, that he was *magnes et adamas*, an adamant in his stout resolute carriage against vice, and a loadstone to encourage and draw virtue to him. And the wise man telleth us, 'The king's favour is towards a wise servant, but his wrath is towards him that causeth shame,' Prov. xiv. 35. As the wind hurteth not the reeds and corn, which yield to it, but rooteth up the sturdy, stubborn oak, which will not bow, so the ruler should deal sharply with the obstinate, but gently with the mild and flexible.

[1] Salvian.

Augustus Cæsar, in whose time Christ was born, was so tender of his people, that when he died they wept, saying, Would he had never been born, or never died![1]

Secondly, As you should work like gods amongst men in executing justice impartially, so likewise in shewing mercy: God is the Father of mercies, 1 Cor. i. 3: rich in mercy, Eph. ii. 4: he hath multitudes of tender mercies, Ps. li. 1: he is abundant in mercy, 1 Pet. i. 3: his mercy is free, Rom. ix. 15: great, Ps. lvii. 10: matchless, Jer. iii. 1: sure, Isa. lv. 1. Mercy, as one observeth,[2] is the chief of all God's attributes. Though in themselves they are all equal; but in regard of our necessities, as oil swims above all other liquors, as the eagle is the chief of birds, the lion of beasts, gold of metals, so mercy is the chief of all God's attributes. He hath a mercy-seat, to note that he sitteth at ease when he is shewing mercy. Whereas judgment is his strange work, Isa. xxviii. 21. We read likewise that mercy pleaseth him, Micah vii. 18. Thus the gods should be merciful men; your hearts should be full of mercy and pity to the sinner, when your hands are executing justice against the sin.

The bee doth not sting till provoked; 'God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,' Lam. iii. 33. There should be bowels of compassion in him that pronounceth sentence of condemnation.

'Ille dolet quoties cogitur esse ferox.'

Augustus never pronounced a deadly sentence without deep sorrow.

Our laws forbid butchers to be jurors, because it is supposed they will be hard-hearted.[3] Among several qualifications which the Jews required in their judges, these were two—1. That they should be fathers of children, hoping that their parental affection would incline them to commiseration. 2. That they should not be eunuchs, for they conceived such very cruel. It is a bestial cruelty to delight in blood.

The laws of Draco are generally condemned, for they were written in blood, and the offender was sure to die, of what nature soever his offence was.[4]—*A. Gell.*

Our English Deborah, Queen Elizabeth, did not without cause exceedingly prize Seneca's first book of Clemency, because it treated of that which is so needful to a prince.[5]

[1] Sueton. [2] Mr Calamy on Ezek. xxxvi. 32. p. 30, before the parliament.

[3] Goodwin Antiq.

[4] Ferina rabies est sanguine et vulneribus gaudere.—*Senec. de Cle.*, lib. i. cap. 24.

[5] Nero, in the beginning of his empire being requested to set his hand to a warrant for the execution of an offender, would say, *Utinam nescirem literari.*

It is the devil's work to be Abaddon, a destroyer. It is Christ's work to be Goel, a Redeemer. 'Mercy and truth preserve the king, his throne is established by mercy,' Prov. xx. 28. Mercy sometime to them that sin through weakness, may be as profitable, as severity to them that sin through wilfulness.

It was certainly a cursed speech of that man, or rather monster, whom the Italian orator[1] mentioneth, that being a judge, said, To hang many is my jubilee, and a great execution is my great recreation. The expression of the Roman emperor is worthy of imitation,[2] That he had rather save the life of one of his subjects, than take away the lives of a thousand of his enemies. Life is a precious jewel, more worth than all this world: 'Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life,' Job ii. It is not, therefore, to be taken away for every trifle. I do not now dispute the question, whether any theft may lawfully be punished with death, but I am sure every theft ought not. The Romans had their axes and rods carried before their consuls, to shew that if the lesser punishments, as of the rods, would serve, the greater, of the axe, should not be used. And they did justly lament the cruelty of those tribunals where the cheap proscription of lives made the judgment-seat differ little from a shambles.

3. Work as gods among men in promoting piety to your power. The great design and work of God is to promote holiness in the world. This was his aim in his internal work or his decree, Eph. i. 4. This is the great end he drives at in his external works. As in the work of redemption, Titus ii. 14; Luke i. 74. In bestowing his word; the precepts in it are the perfect rule of godliness, Gal. vi. 16; the promises are precious encouragements to godliness, 2 Cor. vii. 1; the threatenings are like the angel with a drawn sword in his hand to deter men from the way of ungodliness, Rom. i. 18. And his works of providence are to the same purpose. Afflictions are like the fire to consume the dross, and purify the gold, Heb. xii. 6. Mercies are like the warm influences of the vernal sun to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten men's growth in holiness.

Thus should the gods promote godliness, as the chief business which the most high God hath given them to do. Other things, of what nature soever, which come within the reach of their care, are questions much inferior to this.[3] And this they should do, partly

[1] Siles.

[2] Plut. in Vit. Jul. Cæs.

[3] Prima magistratus cura debet esse, religionem veram promovere, et impietatem prohibere.—*Ames. de Consc.*, lib. v. cap. 25. In hoc reges Deo serviunt in quantum reges.—*Aug.*

by their patterns in being examples of godliness to their people; their lives should be so exact that they should be able to say as Gideon, Judges vii. 17, Look on us and do likewise; or as Paul, Walk as ye have us for an example.

Partly by your precepts; your edicts and commands should be like those of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 2, 4, 'Asa did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.' Mark, upright Asa did not leave men to choose their religions, nor to live as they listed; but he commanded them to obey God's law. He did not strictly enjoin the payment of taxes or customs, and such civil things, and leave it as a matter of indifferency whether men would mind religion or no; but his laws did enforce and confirm the laws of God, as far as he was able.

Partly by countenancing, maintaining, and providing able ministers, 2 Chron. xix. 8; 1 Cor. ix. 13, for the church, as also by taking care that they discharge their trusts faithfully, 2 Chron. xxix. 3–5; 1 Chron. xvi. It is observed of Julian, the apostate, that to root up Christianity he disgraced the orthodox ministry, took away Church maintenance, and forbade Christian schools and places of learning; so Sozomen, lib. v. cap. 5. This very course is now cried up; the Lord prevent it! The prince, indeed, is not called to be a public preacher; but he hath a call to see that none abuse that calling to the hurt or poison of his people.

Partly by suppressing and discountenancing them whose doctrines or lives hinder godliness.[1] Suppressing evil is necessary for the promoting good. Holy Asa removed his mother from being queen upon this very account, 1 Kings xv. 12, 13. The toleration of any in such sins is an intolerable sin. And the jealous God will one day make magistrates know that they shall bear his anger, for bearing such evil doers as blasphemers and heretics are.[2] I speak not against a true Christian liberty in things that are indifferent, or in things that are not fundamental; but I cannot but speak against this antichristian licentiousness, which is, though under other terms, so much pleaded for. It may well make a dumb child speak when his Father is so deeply wounded in his word, honour, people, and ordinances as he is in our days. If state reason compel men to suffer it, they must know that it will prove

[1] Plato would not permit in his commonwealth any such person as asserted God the author of sin.

[2] Christianus nulla re magis dignosci potest quam si Deo factas contumelias et blasphemias severissime ulciscatur, suas obliviscatur.—*Guevara in ep. ad Car.* v.

state ruin. Shall it be treason and death to speak thus and thus against men that are mortal, weak gods? and shall it not at all be penal to blaspheme the Almighty and ever-living God, in denying his truths, which are more worth than the whole world? Surely blasphemies, idolatry, and heresies, sins against the first table, are greater, as being more directly and immediately against God, than sins against the second table, and therefore deserve punishments. *Vide* 1 Kings xviii. 18; Exod. xxi. 17; Levit. xxiv. 10–17; Job xxxi. 25–27; Deut. xiii., *per totum;* though care should be first had and means used for the informing and reforming of such offenders.

Suffer me, as Elihu said, Job xxx. 2, 3, a little, and I will shew you what I have to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from Scripture, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. Because in our unholy and therefore unhappy days, the very duty which I am urging the magistrate to is questioned, as many other truths are, I shall speak a little to it. This Popish doctrine is now almost generally entertained, that magistrates have nothing to do in matters of religion, as some other Jesuitical tenets are now on foot.[1] Parsons, the English Jesuit, in his memorial for reformation, adviseth that all the colleges in the universities, with their revenues, should not be employed, as now they are, for the encouragement of godliness and learning, but be settled on six men; and also, whatever manor or parsonage belonged to the Church; that no man's conscience be pressed for matters in religion; that there should be no fixed ministers, only some itinerary preachers. This is the way, saith he, for popery to flourish in England, though he nameth more ways. But that magistrates ought to meddle in matters of religion, and promote it to their power, may appear clearly to them that are not wilfully blind:—

First, from the practices of godly rulers. What Asa did hath been already mentioned. Hezekiah was a prince that did also promote piety, 2 Chron. xxix. 2–5, 25, 30, and in 2 Chron. xxx. 5, which places are large, therefore not here recited, but full to our purpose, wherein Hezekiah commanded the Levites to sanctify themselves, to praise the Lord with the words of David, and both priests and people to keep the passover.

So Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31–33, 'And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments.' And, mark, he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the

[1] Princeps nihil statuat de religione, saith Mariana the Jesuit.—*Marian.*, cap. 10.

inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel. Observe, 'And made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord.' He made them to serve the Lord, both by his precepts and by the punishments he inflicted on them that would not. This text can never be answered. All the subtle evasions which Jesuitical heads have used to make it invalid could never do it. For if, as some affirm, it is not binding to us under the New, because it is delivered in the Old Testament, then faith in Christ and repentance, which are the sum and substance of the Old Testament, are void also; and so they may rob us, if we will believe them, both of our Saviour and salvation.[1]

Nay, a heathen king enacted a law, that whosoever would not obey the law of God, as well as the law of the king, that judgment should be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment: Ezra vii. 26, And for this law holy Ezra blessed God, v. 27; so Ezra vi. 11; Dan. iii. 29.

Besides these patterns in Scripture, we have the like in ecclesiastical writers.[2] Constantine, a godly emperor, purged the church of idolatry, and established the worship of God by his own imperial commands. Jovinian also, and Theodosius, by their royal edicts, set up and restored the true religion, which Julian and Valens had put down and discountenanced.[3]

Secondly, The precepts given by God to rulers speak this to be their duty. God commandeth him to write him a copy of the law, Deut. xvii. 18. For what end, but that he might keep it himself, as he is a man, and take care that others should not break it, as he is a magistrate? It was an ancient ceremony in Israel at the king's coronation, that when the crown was set on his head, the book of God should be given into his hand, 2 Kings xi. 12, to shew that God committed the care of religion principally to him, that by his power and authority it might be established in his dominions.

God commandeth magistrates to be for the good of their subjects, Rom. xiii. 4. For good, that is, for thy natural good, in pre-

[1] It is observable that in the Kings and Chronicles, when Henry VI.* mentioneth the lives of the kings of Israel, he doth in the first place take notice how they dealt in matters of religion, whether they brake down the graven images, or cut down the groves, or took away the high places, or the like.

[2] Euseb. lib. ii. de vit. Constantini, cap. 44. [3] Theodoret. lib. v. cap. 20.

* Apparently a misprint.—Ed.

serving thy life in safety; for thy civil good, in securing thine estate; for thy spiritual good, in establishing the true worship of God, as a keeper of the first table.[1] Nay, the way to promote the civil good of a people is by promoting their spiritual good. That commonwealth will certainly stand longest which hath not state policy, but state piety for its foundation. How many nations have confirmed this truth, *Ubi non est sanctitas, pietas, fides, instabile regnum est!* A nation without religion is like a city without walls, naked and open to all enemies; like a building without a foundation, which will quickly be overthrown. Religion to a people is as the palladium to the Trojans, as the ancile to the Romans, which kept them safe. The want of this overthrew the great monarchies of the world. What, besides this, hath turned so many kingdoms into ruined heaps, and cities into solitary deserts? If a fruitful land be turned into barrenness, is it not for the iniquity of them that dwell therein? Ps. cvii. 34. Tully observed,[2] that the glory of Greece quickly decayed when the people were given to evil opinions and evil manners. Those rulers that tolerate heretical persons do but nourish a snake in their bosoms, and cherish a worm that in time will eat out their own bowels.

Besides, God promiseth that magistrates shall, in the days of the gospel, be nursing fathers and nursing mothers to his church, Isa. xlix. 23, which surely was never meant of procuring only their corporal, but chiefly of promoting their spiritual good.

Oh consider, is it not reasonable as well as religious that you who rule by God should rule for God?[3] that that power which you have received from him should be improved mostly for him? Remember your time is short, your opportunities are many, your work is great, and your account will be heavy; therefore, work the work of him that sent you into the world. It was a saying of Becket, sometime archbishop of Canterbury, when he was persuaded to deal moderately with the king, *Clavum teneo et ad somnum me vocas?* Do I sit at the stern, and would you have me sleep? Sirs, you steer the rudder of the state; you sit at the helm of the commonwealth; should you be sleepy or slothful? I beseech you to be doing for the furthering piety, and the Lord will be with you.

Now that magistrates may be enabled and incited to walk and to work as gods among men, I shall deliver a few directions, and two or three motives, and then conclude.

[1] Parens on Romans.

[2] Cicero de legib.

[3] *Vide* Zanch. de Magistrat. Gerh. loc. com. Wallæum de eodem sub. Willet in Rom. xiii., controver. 4.

First, If you would walk and work as gods, then get divine principles. According to your principles, such will your practices be; water riseth no higher than its fountain. If, therefore, you would walk as gods, and work for God, you must both walk and work from God. If ever the hand of the dial point, and go right without, the wheels and poises must be right within. It is noted of true and sincere saints, that acted for God in the regal office, that their hearts were perfect with the Lord, 1 Kings xv. 14; Isa. xxxviii. 3. This spiritual life in their souls made them warm and zealous for their Saviour. Caleb, that followed the Lord fully, had another spirit, a different principle from the ten carnal princes, Num. xiv. 24. Men's actions will then be sacred, when their affections are sanctified. He that followeth God he knoweth not why, will forsake God he knoweth not how. A magistrate that is zealous for God only because the times favour such, may soon be brought to be as zealous against God. He that is not knit to his service with the heart-strings of love, spun out of a renewed nature, will easily be parted from his service. Such slavish spirits will serve God no longer than they can serve themselves of God. When Jehu's interest and God's are conjoined, as in rooting out the idolatry of Baal, how fiery is Jehu! how furiously doth he drive! He slayeth all the false prophets, he breaketh down the images of Baal and the house of Baal, and maketh it a draught house, 2 Kings x. 25-27. But when God's interest and Jehu's are divided, as in the calves at Dan and Bethel, there Jehu must be excused; he will uphold them, as some do by that monster of toleration out of state policy, expecting that they should uphold him, 2 Kings x. 27, 28. But what was the reason of this? Surely the want of this divine principle. The fire of Jehu's zeal was not lighted at the altar, for then it would have continued burning, but kitchen fire kindled at a common hearth, and therefore would burn no longer than it had such gross matter as his own credit or profit to feed it; when this fuel was taken away, his fire went out: look in ver. 31, Jehu walked not in the law of the Lord with all his heart; his heart was not perfect; it was not cast into the fire of the word, and new moulded by the Spirit of God. The want of this foundation overturned all that beautiful building which Jehu had set up.

It is a question in politics, Whether a wicked man may be a good magistrate? It is, I suppose, possible for a wicked man when he is in authority to do some good; but I conceive he will hardly do the good he ought; or like Caleb, stand for God when the times

are against God, when the people talked of stoning him; but like the king of Navarre, he will launch no further into the ocean than he can be sure to get back safe. Such a man is like a horse with a thorn in his foot, which may go fairly on in good ways, but if he come to hard ways, he will halt and discover himself. He that hath not gone through the pangs of the new birth, and heartily taken God in Christ for his all, and thereby secured his eternal estate, will scarce hazard his name or estate, much less his limbs or life for God, as he must do that will be faithful unto the death. For with what heart can he look that danger in the face, which, for aught he knoweth, may kill both body and soul?

Or if he be very bold and venturous for God, yet being an evil man, he can never do good, by all his activeness as a ruler, to his own soul. God may give him parts, and gifts, and courage, as a nobleman giveth dainty fare to his nurse, not out of love to him, but for his children's sake. He may, like a ship, be instrumental to land others at some happy port, whereon it never entereth itself. He may be very helpful to others' temporal, nay, and eternal salvasion, and yet miss himself. Jehu, by acting for God, got a lease of an earthly kingdom for three or four lives, but he lost the heavenly one for ever. The most that I know, that a civil, yet unsanctified magistrate, gets by his forwardness and heat for God, is onlȳ a cooler hell; though your names are divine, yet if ye be not partakers of the divine nature, ye are lost for ever. Now, what advantage will it be to you, like Noah's carpenters, to build an ark for the saving of others, and to perish yourselves?

Believe it, sirs, if ye would have good fruits in your lives, there must be this root of holiness in your hearts. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good thińgs. What water is in the well, such will be in the bucket; and what ware is in the shop, such will be on the stall; therefore when God promiseth that men shall walk in his ways, and keep his judgments, and do them; he promiseth also to put his spirit, or a new spirit into them, which should enable them thereunto, Ezek. xi. 19, and xxxvi. 26, 27. The flesh will serve to enable a man to walk after the flesh; but the Spirit of God alone can enable a man to walk after the Spirit. Natural light is not sufficient to mortify natural lusts. It may cover for some time, but can never kill sin. Some men may be like the lions in Daniel's den, chained up, or restrained, and yet have their ravenous dispositions, their old carnal hearts still. Civility, though commendable, yet without inward sanctity, is not sufficient to prove one interested in a Saviour, or in a state of salvation.

There is as much difference between a moral man and a real Christian, as between a lifeless picture and a living person. A lion and a lamb, a raven and a dove, darkness and light, death and life, do not differ more than a sinner and a saint, than a man only civilised and a sanctified Christian.

Oh, sirs, think of it seriously, the terms upon which salvation may be had, are the same to you and the meanest beggar,[1] John iii. 3. If heaven be not in you by the indwelling of God's Spirit, renewing you in the spirit of your mind, it is impossible that ever you should be in heaven. The tide of your natures, and the wind of your affections must be turned the clean contrary way to what they are by your birth, if ever you sail to the haven of heaven. Labour therefore as for life, for this principle of spiritual life, without which you cannot escape the second death.

Secondly, If ye would walk and work as gods among men, then your rule must be divine as well as your principle. Every calling hath some rule to go by, in conformity to which their excellency consisteth. The lawyer hath his Littleton and Coke; the physician hath his Galen and Hippocrates; the philosopher hath his Aristotle; the Christian hath the word of God, a sure and a perfect rule to walk by, Gal. vi. 16. And this word of God is in a special manner commended and committed to the magistrate as his Directory. Joshua i. 8, 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth,' saith God to the chief governor of Israel, 'but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success:' And Deut. xvii. 18, 19, 'The king that sitteth upon the throne, shall write him a copy of the law. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord, and to keep all the words of this law.'

It is a maxim of the law of England, that the law itself ought to be the rule by which all judges must be regulated, all controversies tried, and all cases decided. It is good to keep close to the laws of men, that are warrantable by Scripture, but it is best to keep close to the word of God. There are the best precepts for justice, the best patterns of just men; nay, and of the infinitely righteous God. You have the example of God himself, how just, how holy he is in all his doings, how he walketh, how he worketh. Cæsar's ambition was to imitate Alexander; Themistocles endeavoured to resemble

[1] The smoke of a great man's sacrifice smells never the sweeter before God, because he is perfumed with musk, or clothed in silk.

Militiades. Do you labour to be like God, to hate sin, to love holiness, to discourage the profane, to countenance the pious, to be active and zealous, both by your patterns and precepts, for the glory of God.

In all your difficulties make the word of God your counsellor; in all your doubts let Scripture resolve you. You may look too much to the light within you, which is imperfect and (1 Tit.) defiled, as Quakers make a Christ of it; but you can never look too much to this light without you, which is perfect and pure, without the least blemish or defect.

The Jews say, that if printing had been found out in the time of Moses, yet was the king bound to write out two copies of the law with his own hand; one to keep in the treasury, and the other to carry about with him as his *vade mecum*. Alphonsus, king of Arragon, as some say, read over the Bible fourteen times with Lyra's notes upon it.[1] And that renowned maiden, Queen Elizabeth, when she passed in triumphal state through the city of London, after her coronation, when the Bible was presented to her at the Little Conduit in Cheapside, she received it with both her hands, and kissing it, laid it to her breasts, saying, that it had ever been her chiefest delight, and should be the rule whereby she would frame her government.[2] This was the delight, the joy, the counsellor of that magistrate that was after God's own heart, Ps. cxix. 70, and cxi. 24. And this made him wiser than his teachers, than his elders, Ps. cxix. 97–100. And, indeed, this book of books only can make a wise and good Christian, captain, counsellor, and ruler. Let, therefore, the balance of the sanctuary weigh all, the oracles of God decide all, the rule of the word square all, and then nothing will be amiss. Let the Bible be to you as the pillar of fire by night, and the cloud by day to the Israelites, directing you through the wilderness of this world, till ye come to the true Canaan.

It was a memorable saying of King Edward VI.,[3] when he was crowned, and had three swords put into his hands, signifying his power over three nations, England, France, and Ireland, *Deest adhuc unus gladius*, viz., *Sacrorum Bibliorum volumen; Ille liber gladius Spiritus est, et gladiis his omnibus longe anteferendus.* There is one sword wanting—namely, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, which excelleth them all.

Thirdly, Let your end be divine as well as your rule, if ye would walk and work as gods among men. The moralists tell us that

[1] Theodosius II. wrote the New Testament out with his own hand.

[2] Speed Chronic. [3] Baldæ de Script. Brit. cent. ii.

actions are much specified from their ends.[1] If your actions are materially good, yet if finally evil, they are denominated wicked. If they are according to God's word for the matter, yet if ye make not God's glory your end, they are evil. Therefore, if ye would have the arrows of your actions to fly right, let your eyes take right aim at this mark. Do all for God.[2] *Quicquid agas, propter Deum agas*, saith Luther. As ye are men, ye were created to serve him; as magistrates, doubly bound to honour your great Master. God's free grace is the fountain of your power, and therefore God's glory must be the end. It is reported of Tamerlane, that warlike Scythian, that having overcome Bajazet the great Turk, he asked him, Whether he had ever given God thanks for making him so great an emperor? The great Turk confessed ingenuously that he never thought of it; to whom Tamerlane replied, That it was no wonder so ungrateful a wretch was made a spectacle of misery. For you, saith he, being blind of one eye, and I lame of one leg, was there any worth in us, why God should set us over two great empires, of Turks and Tartars? So truly may you think, it was mere mercy which advanced you more than others, and therefore it is your duty to advance God more than others. If ye love your souls, take heed of self. Oh how many millions by seeking themselves have lost themselves; by seeking their own glory, pleasure, and profit for a time, have brought themselves to shame, pain, and loss to all eternity! Oh beware of this root of bitterness, self. Do not, like Demetrius, pretend to be zealous for the goddess, when in truth it was for his gain. Or like watermen, row one way, towards God, and Christ, and heaven, and look another way, towards the world and the flesh; but give up thyself wholly to him. Lay out thy talents altogether for him; esteem it thy felicity and privilege that thou hast more advantages than others, whereby thou mayest exceed others in serviceableness to thy maker, preserver, and redeemer.

Let that peerless prince be thy pattern, even the Lord Jesus Christ: 'I seek not my own glory,' John viii. 50. And when he came to die, 'Father,' saith he, 'I have glorified thee on earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,' John xvii.

This was the Father's end in your creation, Prov. xvi. 4; Rev. iv. 11; the Son's end in your redemption, Luke i. 71; 1 Cor. vi. 20; the Spirit's end in your sanctification, Eph. ii. 10; John xvii. 10. Therefore let this be your end: pray, and read, and hear, and watch over your own souls; walk inoffensively before God, work

[1] Actiones specificantur ab objecto, fine, et circumstantiis.—*Eustath.*

[2] Omnibus operationibus nostris, cælestis intentio adjungi debet.

industriously for God, and do all that God may be glorified, 1 Cor. x. 31.

We call not those kings happy, saith Austin, who reigned long, but those who have reigned most for God;[1] *qui potestatem suam divinæ majestati famulam faciunt*,—that have made their authority serviceable to the divine majesty. God can easily throw those crowns from men's heads which are not laid at his feet; and he will assuredly lay them low that do not set him high; for those that honour him he will honour, but those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

I come now to the motives to stir you up both to walk and work as gods among men.

1. Consider, God beholdeth you this day. He taketh notice, and observeth how ye walk, and how ye work: 'All the ways of man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his paths,' Prov. v. 21. Be your works what they will be, God seeth them, and he weigheth them in the balance of the sanctuary; and that beam will discover it, if they be never so little too light.

He beholdeth not only your practices, but your principles; he knoweth what is the wind which causeth the mill to go; he knoweth by what rule, and for what end, and from what principle ye act; all things are γυμνὰ καὶ τετραχηλισμένα, 'naked and open in the eyes of him with whom we have to do,' Heb. iv. 13. The words are very emphatical, and signify thus much: that as the lineaments and outside of the body is very visible when it is naked and unclothed, and as the bowels and inside are discovered when the body is dissected and anatomised, so are both your outwards and inwards, your actions and affections, manifest, naked, and open to God.

Nay, he beholdeth what ye do in the dark. You may work so cunningly, as to hide your designs and works from men, but not from God; there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves, Job xxxiv. 22. This sun knoweth no night, no darkness. Wherever he is,—and he is infinite and omnipresent,—it is light, and day; therefore the eyes of Christ, Rev. i. 14, are said to be as a flame of fire, implying his omniscience, and that he is able to disperse all darkness. For philosophy and experience teach us that those creatures which have fiery eyes can see in the dark; and the reason is clear, because they do not see as we do, *recipiendo species ab objecto, sed extra-mittendo species*, by receiving species from the object, but by sending out species or rays, which do both enlighten the medium, the air, and

[1] Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. iii. cap. 24.

apprehend the object. Thus Christ seeth in the dark, ye see; 'yea, the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day; to him the darkness and the light are both alike,' Ps. cxxxix. 12.

Ponder, then, this omnipresence and omniscience of God, and walk before him, and be upright, Gen. xvii. 1. The moralist would have his scholars to live always as in the eye of Cato: Oh do you live ever as in the eye of God! Beware what thou doest, for God seeth thee. 'God standeth in the congregation; he judgeth among the gods,' Ps. lxxxii. 1. He judgeth among you, he is present with you; not always in regard of approbation, for your deeds may be evil, but always in regard of observation.

This was Jehoshaphat's argument to incite his judges to care and caution: 2 Chron. xix. 6, 'Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.' He is with you in the judgment; with you to commend and praise you if ye do well, to condemn and punish you if you do ill, to observe and take notice whether ye do well or ill. As if Jehoshaphat had said, I cannot ride circuit with you, nor be present with you in all your councils; but the Lord, a greater than I, can, and doth: he is with you in the judgment: 'Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed, and do it; for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts,' ver. 7.

When the Ethiopian judges were set in their seats of judicature,[1] certain empty chairs were placed about them, some say twelve, into which they imagined the holy angels came. And this they hoped would work in their magistrates circumspection, and fear of doing anything unworthy the angels' eye observation. I must tell you a greater than angels is here, even the God of angels; therefore be wary and watchful; take heed what ye do.

Among the Egyptians it is reported,[2] when their rulers were set, they caused the image of a divine numen to be hung about his neck who sat next to the judges. The Deity is ever near you, with you, among you. Let the consideration thereof quicken you to zeal and faithfulness in all your transactions.

This made David, the king of Israel, so upright and holy in his conversation: 'I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee,' Ps. cxix. 168. Observe his holy carriage, I have kept thy precepts; and its heavenly cause, for all my ways are before thee; or, as in another place, 'I have set the Lord always before me,'

[1] Quintus Pius in 2 Chron. xix. [2] Diodor. Sicul., lib. i.

Ps. xvi. 8. As if he had spoken: I have not done what seemed good in my own eyes; I have not walked according to my own will, but my race hath been according to the rule which thou hast prescribed me. I have kept thy precepts, for I considered thou wast an ear-witness to my words; therefore I did set a watch before my lips, that I might not offend with my tongue: that thou wast an eye-witness to my works, therefore I endeavoured that my feet might not decline thy paths: that thou wast an heart-witness to my thoughts, therefore I durst not let vain thoughts lodge within me: 'I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee,' &c.

Surely, if Alexander's empty chair, which his captains, when they met in council, set before them, did cause them to be kept in such good order, what behaviour should the presence of God cause among the gods!

The Jews covered Christ's face, and then they buffeted him: men hide God from their eyes, and think to hide themselves from God's eyes, and then make bold to provoke him.

Believe it, reader, God seeth thee whatever thou dost; he is present with thee wherever thou art. When thou art in thy closet, in thy family, among thy neighbours; when thou art punishing drunkards or swearers in the parish where thou livest, when thou art sitting on the bench at the sessions or assize, he observeth in what manner thou actest, whether coldly and carelessly, as one indifferent about the discouraging of sin,—though sin deal not so mildly with men, when it turneth them into intolerable and eternal flames;—or whether diligently and fervently, as one fired with love to his majesty, and zeal for his glory, and hatred of iniquity. He observeth from what principle thou actest, whether from nature or grace; and for what end thou actest, whether thy own or his glory; whether it be to please such a man, or the blessed God; whether to get thyself a name, or to make his name great.

Job hath a notable expression—I wish it were written on every magistrate's heart:—'He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous, but with kings are they on the throne,' Job xxxvi. 7. He is *totus oculus*, all eye; he seeth you through and through. His eyes are with kings on the throne, to observe what the king doth there; to see whether justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; whether the sceptre of his kingdom be a righteous sceptre; whether he be clothed with grace as with a garment, and arrayed with purity as well as purple; to see whether the zeal of God's house do eat him up, Ps. lxix. 9, and he prefer the spiritual before the temporal good of his people; to see whether he will suffer them to

be lawless in religion, and allow, out of hellish policy, that which is destructive to piety, even a cursed toleration.

God's eye, sirs, may well make you look well to your walking, to your hands and hearts. Are uncleanness, injustice, oppression, lukewarmness, atheism, bribery, fit objects for God's eye? It was ordered in the law of Moses, that when any went forth of the camp to ease nature, they should dig a hole with a paddle, and cover it; and the reason is given: 'For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp; therefore shall it be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee,' Deut. xxiii. 13, 14. This law noteth how the presence of God should keep us from polluting ourselves. Sin is the soul's excrement; God's walking among us should work in us a hatred of such defilements.

God's eye may make you work as gods among men. Cæsar's soldiers were prodigal of their blood when he beheld them. How bold should ye be in the discouraging the sturdiest, stateliest offenders! how forward in the countenancing the poorest, pious Christian, considering that God beholdeth you!

Epaminondas rejoiced much that he had done noble exploits, his parents being alive to take notice of them. What noble acts soever are done, for the promoting godliness, for the stopping the mouth of wickedness, by the children of the Most High, are all known to the ever-living Father, who recordeth them faithfully, and will reward them bountifully. Be therefore exact in your walkings, and zealous in your working, 'since your labour shall not be in vain for the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Secondly, Consider the day of your dissolutions is hastening. While ye are creeping only in God's way, or doing negligently God's work, death is posting with speed towards you. Consider the verse following the text; though he hath said, Ye are gods, and called you children of the Most High, yet ye must die like men. Your honours and your worships, your majesties and your highnesses, must shortly lie in the dust, and be as low as the meanest. Diseases spare none for their fine clothes, high places, or great estates, and the cannon of death doth as soon hit the great commanders as the common soldier; it maketh no difference. Charles the Great, Pompey the Great, and Alexander the Great, were all little in death's hands. Men in places of greatest power are not persons privileged from the arrest of this surly sergeant.

Ye that are divine in name have human mortal natures; and as ye are shields of the earth, so ye are earthen shields. What is said of the duke of Parma's sword, is true of death: it maketh no differ-

ence between robes and rags, between prince and peasant: it is the way of all the earth, Joshua xxv. 14; the great road in which all travel, and the end of all the living, Job xxx. 23; the great inn to which all travel. 'There is no man,' saith Solomon, 'that hath power of his spirit, to retain it, neither hath he power in the day of death; there is no discharge in that war,' Eccles. viii. 8.

It is storied of Alexander,[1] that having heard of Paradise, he was very eager of seeking it out, and for that end came into the east part of the earth, when an old man, meeting some of his soldiers, bade them tell Alexander that he sought Paradise in vain; for the way to Paradise was the way of humility, which he did not take: but, saith he, Take this stone and carry it to Alexander, and tell him that from this stone he shall know what he is. Now the stone was a precious stone, and of such a quality that whatsoever thing was weighed with it, that was still the heavier, only if it were covered with dust, then it was as light as straw; thereby signifying that though Alexander, and men in authority, outweigh others in life, yet when they are covered with dust, when death cometh, they are as light as others; all their greatness cometh to nothing. Oh how little earth containeth great men when they die, who will not be contented with much while they live!

If, then, ye must die shortly, doth it not behove you to live strictly? If your time be little, should not your work be great for God and your souls? Whether thou wilt think of it or no, death is approaching thee; the sun doth not move faster in the heavens than thou art moving to the earth. The glass of thy life, for aught thou knowest, is nigh its last sand. Sure I am thou art now nearer thine unchangeable estate than ever thou wert; and doth it not concern thee to walk exactly among men, and to work industriously for God? Oh how much wilt thou wish at an hour of death that thou hadst walked humbly with God, and wrought hard for the Lord all the time of thy life!

It is observed among the papists that the cardinals, who think their cowl and other religious habits ill becoming them in their health, yet are very ambitious to die and be buried in them: and I have taken notice in several churches, where are the monuments of great persons, that their effigies must be erected kneeling, with a Bible in their hands, holding their hands up to heaven, and looking very devoutly with their eyes up to the same place; when I have heard of some of them, how profane and atheistical they were in their lives; that they used the name of God often in

[1] Quin. Curt.

swearing, but seldom in praying, and prized a romance or a play-book above, and read them oftener than, the Bible. Truly thus it is; piety that is trampled under feet by you now in your health and life, believe it, will be a pearl of great price with you in your sickness and death: then you will think the holiest man the happiest man; the precisest Christian in the most blessed condition; then you would willingly change states with them which are now objects of your scorn; then you will wish that you had denied yourselves, crucified the flesh, glorified God, and walked after the Spirit; that you had spent that time in praying and reading which you have spent in carding or dicing, or vain recreations; that you had improved that wealth and strength in the service of your Saviour, for the honour of God, and welfare of your soul, which have been laid about the world and your lusts. O sirs, when this time cometh, you will have other thoughts of sin and holiness, than now ye have! Sin will not be so pleasant and lovely, nor holiness so mean and unworthy as now it is in your eyes.

Probably you can hear of death by the reports of others, and be little troubled;[1] ye can stand it out stiffly against such false fire, with, We must all die, and nothing so sure; God knoweth who shall go next; and the like: all this while the heart not with seriousness considering of it, so as to be preparing for it; the soul as much neglected, God as little regarded, and the affections as much enslaved to fleshly lusts as before. But when death, that king of terrors and terror of kings, climbs up to your own windows, and entereth into your chamber, and cometh with its pale face to your bed-side, and boldly arresteth you with a warrant from heaven, assuring you by its symptoms on your body that you must in good earnest into the other world, and there have all your walkings and workings interpreted and examined by the infinitely pure and righteous God, and your souls, according to your deeds, sentenced impartially, and sent immediately to heaven or hell; then surely your apprehensions of a new nature, and strict conversation, will change, and you will wish, with all your souls, for a little of others' oil, for your lamps will go out. The stoutest unregenerate heart alive will droop at last, when God cometh to take away his soul; then his crest falls, and his plumes flag.

Now, possibly thy cup overfloweth, thou hast a large portion of the good things of this world, and they have so much of thy heart that thou art little troubled about the things of the other world;

[1] As birds build in steeples, and are never troubled at the noise of bells, being used to it; nor ye at the sight of graves or coffins.

the table of thy life now is richly spread with honours, pleasures, relations, possessions, and these have the largest share in thy heart; in these thou solacest thyself, desiring no other heaven: but what wilt thou do when death shall come with a voider and take all away, even all thy treasure on earth? Then thou wilt wish thou couldst find a treasure in heaven, that thou mightest die the death of the righteous, and have thy latter end like his: but oh, friend, thou shouldst then have lived their lives, and have had thy conversation like theirs: as the crab in the fable told the serpent, who, when she had received her death's wound for her crooked conditions, stretched out herself straight, *at oportuit sic vixisse*, that she should have been straight in her lifetime. The way to make thy death comfortable is to make thy life serviceable to God and thy soul. He that would enjoy true rest when he dieth, must labour faithfully and diligently whilst he liveth. It will be like a dagger at the heart in an hour of death to reflect upon the talents misemployed, and opportunities misimproved, which free grace afforded you for the honouring of God and furthering of your own salvations. Sins of omission will wound deeper at a dying hour than most are aware of. God hath committed a great trust to you, and the day of your lives is the only time of discharging it; besides, ye know not how few hours ye may have to your day, whether it shall be a winter or a summer day; the shadows of the evening may suddenly stretch themselves upon you, and then it will be no longer day; therefore work the work of him that sent you into the world while it is day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work, John ix. 4. Is it not sad that our common observation should be so much verified in the practices of great men, that bells strike thick while they are rising, but stand still and give no sound at all when they are at full pitch. That magistrates should, like the sun, the higher in the zodiac, move the slower.

The more noble creatures are, the more active they are; men more active than beasts, angels than men. One I remember observeth, that God would not accept the first-born of an ass, because it was a dull slothful creature. The Spirit of God, which is in all that are sanctified, is compared to fire, Acts ii.; therefore they that would not grieve it, must not be slothful in business, but fiery, fervent (seething hot, as the word signifieth) in spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11. Hence it was that the church of Ephesus got letters testimonial from heaven, Rev. ii. 2, 'I know thy works and thy labour, how thou canst not bear them that are evil.' And

indeed the more good a justice hath in himself, the less he will bear with evil in others.

Augustine hath a true saying, *Qui non zelat, non amat*: he that is not zealous for God, hath no true love to God; for though love be a passion, yet it delighteth to shew itself in acting for the party beloved.

When Calvin grew sickly, some friends dissuaded him from hard studying, but he gave them this answer, *Vultisne Christum me invenire otiosum*: would you have Christ, when he comes to me by death, to find me idle? so do ye think that when sinners, Jehu-like, drive furiously, ye should not, like Egyptians, go heavily, lest death find you idle. Observe what became of the idle servant that hid his talent in a napkin, Mat. xxv. 30; he was punished with an eternal long night, who would not work in his short day.

3. Consider the day of judgment. God will then search and sentence you, discover and reward you according to your works. Ye that examine and try others, shall then be examined and tried yourselves, and ye that acquit or condemn others, shall then be acquitted or condemned yourselves.

How should this thought move you to walk exactly, since your hearts shall be anatomised, and your lives manifested before God, angels, and men! Could ye but, as Jerome, hear the sound of the last trump always in your ears, 'Arise ye dead, and come to judgment,' surely ye would be holy judges and justices indeed. Peter maketh this argument a strong enforcement to holiness: 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11, 'The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works therein shall be burnt up. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' Observe the certainty of it, the day of the Lord will come. If it were doubtful, it would not be so dreadful; but it will come surely, though it come slowly, therefore men had need to be holy. Tertullian observed of all those that professed Christianity in his time, none lived so loosely as those that did not believe the certainty of the day of judgment. But observe, 2, the suddenness of it: The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; when men at midnight are securely sleeping, they dream not of, nor prepare for, a thief. It is sometimes called a day, Mat. xxv. 13, *propter revelationem secretorum*—things that are now dark and secret, shall be then as clear and apparent as at noonday. The fire of that day will make things legible which

are written with the juice of lemons. In the spring-time both wholesome roots and poisonous will be discovered, which all the winter of this life were hid. The books of God's omniscience and man's conscience, saith one, shall be then opened, and secret sins shall be then as legible as if it were written with the brightest star, or the most glittering sunbeams upon a wall of crystal, Eccles. xii. 14. And it is said to be at night, *propter improvisionem*, &c., because of most men's unpreparedness for it. The destruction of this new world by fire will find men generally in the same careless, carnal, secure, sensual condition, as did the destruction of the old world by water, Luke xxi. 35; as the snare on a sudden catcheth the bird, so will that day of the Lord seize on such beasts. Observe, 3, the dreadfulness of it, 'The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up.' Well may it be called the great and terrible day of the Lord, when the Judge will be a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29; and shall come in flaming fire, 1 Thes. i. 6, 7; try them by a fiery law, Deut. xxxiii. 2; before a tribunal of fire, Ezek. i. 27; plead with them in flames of fire, Isa. lx. 15; and condemn ungodly ones to eternal fire. Oh how dreadful is the voice and noise of fire! Fire in the night! How fearful and frightful, then, will such fires at the day of judgment be! As often as I think of that day, my whole body trembleth, saith Jerome.[1] Observe, 4, the apostle's inference from it, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!' as if he had said, We had need to have grace in truth, that must undergo such a trial. We that must meet with so strict and dreadful an examination, had need to be holy to admiration: 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!'

Surely, if any argument imaginable can persuade to purity, this terrible day can do it. The sound of the last trump may well cause a retreat, and call us off from an eager pursuit of the flesh and the world, Eccles. xi. 9; and it may also stir you up to purity, if you would meet Christ at that day in peace. The throne of Christ is a white throne, Rev. xx. 11, and oh, with what trembling heart wilt thou, oh black sinner, stand before this white throne: 1 Pet. iv. 18, 'If the righteous be scarcely saved (not in regard of the uncertainty, but difficulty,) where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?' Surely the drunkard's cup then will be wormwood, not wine. The sentence on the swearer, then, will be of cursing, not

[1] Quoties diem illum considero, toto corpore contremisco.—*Jerome.*

blessing. As he loved cursing now, so then will it come to him; the adulterer's pleasure now will then prove poison; and the prayerless man now will then pray hard; work in prayer for some ease, some end, if not a pardon, yet a reprieve for one hour, at least one drop of water to cool his tongue; but he shall work at the labour in vain, and be eternally denied.

Oh look therefore, and make sure of true holiness, of the power of godliness; for the fire of that day will discover whether you are dross or gold. Look that the rule by which you walk be right, even the word of God, for by that you shall be judged for your eternal life or death, John xii. 36.

Ah, how exactly shouldst thou live, that must be tried for thine endless estate by so strict a law!

How diligently shouldst thou keep thy heart, knowing that God will judge the secrets of thy heart! Rom. ii. 16. How carefully shouldst thou keep the door of thy lips, considering that of every—not only swearing or cursing, but—idle word, which thou shalt speak, thou shalt give account at the day of Christ! Mat. xii. 35. How wary shouldst thou be in all thy deeds, believing that thou shalt appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of everything done in the body of flesh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil! 2 Cor. v. 10. So think, so speak, so act, as one that must be judged for all at the great day of Christ.

This may likewise incite you to work as gods amongst men, because at that day Christ will come, and his reward will be with him, to give to every one according to his works, Rev. xxii. 12. Your actions now are seed; if ye would reap liberally on that great harvest-day, ye must sow liberally in this seed-time. Christ will then demand how ye improved the many advantages and opportunities which he put into your hands, for the magnifying his name, countenancing his people, propagating his gospel, punishing his enemies, and discouraging the workers of iniquity. He will ask you why at such a time, when you knew his name was blasphemed, his day was profaned, his ministers and ordinances were trampled upon, you never stirred, or were zealous for their vindication. You thought it was good sleeping in a whole skin; you were loath to offend your neighbours, or you were unwilling to get the ill-will of great ones, that under pretence of love to all the people of God, would have his blasphemous adversaries spared, nay encouraged. See whether that Jesuitical tenet, that magistrates must only be second-table men, that they have nothing to do in matters of religion, will hold water at that day. Oh how exceedingly will such be ashamed of it then,

who now own it in their principles and practices! Possibly thou art one of that heathen Gallio's disciples, that would meddle in matters of wrong, but sit still in matters of religion: Acts xviii. 14, 17, 'Gallio cared for none of those things.' I must tell thee thou art like then to find hell hot, for thy being so cold in the cause of the blessed and glorious God.

Oh think of that day, and let it move thee to a faithful, zealous discharge of thy duty. Zaleucus Locrensis, in his proem to his laws, hath these words: 'Let this be often pressed upon men, that there are gods, and that an account must be given to them of men's actions.' [1] Consider the day of the Lord is coming, and who may abide it! In a word, 'Hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man: For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,' Eccles. xii. 13, 14.

[2] Hoc inculcatum sit esse deos, et venturum esse summum et fatalem illum diem.

THE INCOMPARABLENESS OF GOD.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Worshipful Henry Ashurst, Junior, Esq.; and to the Honourable Lady Diana Ashurst, his Religious Consort.

Such is the excellency of the soul of man, that the very heathen, whose souls were almost wholly immersed in grease and sensuality, and served but as salt to preserve their bodies for a time from putrefaction, according to the opinion of one of the most ingenious among them, have acknowledged it a divine plant, a drop of the ocean of being, a ray of a deity; and the body but the case or cabinet of this jewel. The dim rushlight of nature hath enabled some of them to discern the spirituality, quick, comprehensive, self-reflective motions, and immortality of their specifical forms, as they called their souls, and thence to conclude their worth and nobleness. But the clear sunlight of Scripture advantageth unto a fuller discovery of its excellency. It shows us its original, that it is of celestial extraction, created immediately by the Father of spirits, a beam of the Sun of righteousness, a bubble of the fountain of life, of a much higher descent than the house of clay and earthly tabernacle, the body, Gen. ii. 7; Heb. xii. 9; Zech. xii. 1. It acquaints us with its duration, that it runs parallel with the line of eternity, and swallows up years, and ages, and generations, and thousands of thousands, and millions of millions, as small drops and minutes and nothings, in the bottomless ocean and endlessness of its abode and continuance. When the body, like the sacrifice, falleth to the earth and is turned into ashes, the soul, like the flame, aspireth and ascendeth to God, Eccles. xii. 7; Phil. i. 23; Mat. x. 28, xxii. 31, 32. It manifesteth the soul's capacity, how no being is excepted from its consideration, all are within its compass and horizon; it can view every [being] with its intellectual eye. It is not bounded with corporeal beings, nor limited with material objects, nor circumscribed with created essences, but is capable of apprehending the first cause, the being of beings, the original of all

things. It is able not only to retrospect upon its own motions, and to survey the several parts, and ranks, and orders, and rarities, and delicacies, and excellencies of the earth and this sublunary world, but also to ascend to the highest heavens, and behold the beautiful face of the blessed God, till it hath looked itself into the very likeness, and thereby rendered itself fit and meet for his dearest love and eternal embraces.

The excellency of our souls doth eminently appear in its receptiveness of the divine image. Great princes do not stamp their image on mean things, as brass and pewter, but on the most excellent metals, as silver and gold, Eph. iv. 23, 24; Col. iii. 10; Gen. i. 26. And its capableness of enjoying immediately the blessed God. To stand before kings doth both speak and make a person honourable and worthy, Prov. xxii. 29. God alone is the fountain of honour and the standard of excellency, Isa. xliii. 5. Every being is his coin, and he stampeth on it the rate it shall go at. The holiness and happiness of the rational creature consisteth in these two: his holiness, in conformity to God; his happiness, in communion with him. And these two have a dependence on each other. They only who are like him, can enjoy him. 'If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and the truth is not in us,' 1 John i. 6. Holiness, or the image of God, is not only an indispensable condition, without which no man shall enjoy God, Heb. xii. 14; John iii. 3; but withal an absolutely necessary disposition, without which no man can enjoy God, Col. i. 12; 2 Cor. v. And as conformity disposeth for communion, so communion increaseth conformity; vision causeth assimilation in nature, Gen. xxxi. 38, 39; grace, 2 Cor. iii. 18; and glory, 1 John iii. 2.

Though the motions of the understanding and will are in some respect circular, yet the understanding is the first mover and the leading faculty, and so the knowledge of the blessed God is both antecedent to, and productive of, this image. Though the knowledge of creatures puffeth up, polluteth, and so debaseth and destroyeth the soul, sinking it the deeper into hell, as a vessel laden with silver and gold and the most precious commodities, when it miscarrieth, sinketh the deeper for its weight and burden, 1 Cor. viii. 1; Luke xii. 47, 48; yet the knowledge of God is humbling, advancing, purifying, and saving, Job xlii.; 2 Pet. iii. 18; John xvii. 3. The incomparable excellency of the boundless blessed God is the subject of this treatise, which I present to you both as a testimony of the honour and service I owe to you, and of my

desire to be instrumental for your spiritual and eternal good. The subject is the highest imaginable; and though the manner of handling it be plain and ordinary, and infinitely below and unbecoming the divine majesty—'For who can express his noble acts, or display all his praise,' Ps. cvi. 2—yet the matter of it doth deserve, and may prevail for your acceptance of it.

If knowledge be the excellency of a man, and differenceth him from a beast, surely then divine knowledge, or the knowledge of God in Christ, is the excellency of a Christian, and differenceth him from other men. Our awe of, love to, and trust in the divine Majesty, are founded in the right knowledge of him. Creatures, the more they are known, the less they are esteemed; but the more the blessed God is known, the more he is prized, desired, and obeyed, Ps. lxxiii. 25; lxxvi. 7; xc. 11; ix. 10. Our hatred of sin and contempt of the world proceed from our acquaintance with God. He only hath hateful thoughts of sin, and self-loathing apprehensions because of it, who hath seen the great and glorious, the good and gracious God, whose authority is contemned, whose law is violated, whose name is dishonoured, whose image is defaced, and whose love is abused by it, Job xlii. 6; Isa. vi. 5. He only lives above this present evil world, and all the riches and honours and pleasures thereof, who can look beyond it to the infinite God, and those unsearchable riches and weights of glory, and rivers of pleasures that are in and with him. That which was rich and glorious and pleasant to a soul before, hath now no worth, no glory, no pleasure, by reason of that wealth and glory and pleasure which doth so infinitely exceed. When the God of glory appeared to Abraham, he quickly and quietly left his country and kindred, and followed God, not knowing whither he went, Gen. xii. 1, 2; Acts vii. 3. If the God of glory appear to your souls, you will soon wink upon these withering vanities, broken cisterns, and gilded nothings, and count them all but dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of him in Christ.

You have begun well, go on and persevere in well-doing. I shall give you the same counsel which the holy apostle giveth to those of whom he was persuaded that they had those things which accompanied salvation, Heb. vi. 9. 'Take heed lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, whereby ye should depart away from the living God,' Heb. iii. 12. 'Look diligently, lest ye should fail of the grace of God,' Heb. xii. 15. When false coin is common abroad, we are the more careful what money we take; when much false grace is up and down amongst us, and so many please themselves

with their profession, or spiritual privileges, or sacred performances, or siding with this or that party, and form of worship, or the respect and repute they have with others; it concerns you to be the more suspicious of yourselves, lest you should fail of that grace of God which conformeth the heart to the nature, and the life to the will and law of God.

Sir,—You are descended of a worthy, ancient, and religious family; your grandfather, as I have heard, was eminent for holiness; your father is noted and honoured for one that feareth God above many; you have hereby the more encouragement, advantage, and engagement to exercise yourself to godliness. Tamerlane made it his practice to read often the heroic deeds of his progenitors, not as proud of them, or boasting in them, but as glorious patterns, to inflame his soul with a love of their virtues. Man is a creature that is led more by the eye than the ear, by patterns than by precepts; and no patterns are more prevalent than of those whom nature and grace oblige us to esteem and affect. These examples, above all others, as flaming beacons on a hill, call us to a stout defence of virtue, when it is invaded by its enemies. Alexander, finding one of his name cowardly, charged him to change his name, or to become valiant. When one of the Scipios, descended of Scipio Africanus, became dissolute, the Roman senate ordered him to put off

Madam,—Your birth is honourable,[1] but such honour without holiness extends not beyond the meridian of this world; grace only is eternal glory. That honour which is woven in the finest tapestry of earthly privileges will lose colour, and fade away; but the knowledge of God is a possession for ever. Nobility by parents is but nobility by parchment, and that is but skin-deep at most, and will waste with time. Godliness alone is that nobility which no age can consume, and which will run parallel with the line of eternity.

The whole earth hath not a pleasanter sight than greatness joined with goodness. Greatness itself is venerable, but goodness joined with it, addeth a new splendour and lustre to it; as a sparkling diamond set in a gold ring, it attracteth the eyes, and challengeth a greater reverence and respect from all. Evil greatness is a swelling dropsy, a disease of the body politic, as intolerable a burden as the earth groans under; but grace and virtue are the more excellent and amiable by the greatness of the person in whom they dwell. It

[1] Daughter to the Right Honourable the Lord Paget.

that ring which he wore as the badge of his noble family, because, by his vicious life, he was a reproach to it. The truth is, a wicked son of a godly father, as Uriah, carrieth letters of his own condemnation about him, causing the patterns and precepts of his family to be auxiliaries to his own reproach and infamy; whilst the light and lustre of his ancestors renders his works of darkness the more gross and palpable. I mention not these things as suspecting your integrity, but to provoke and quicken you to the greater care and circumspection in your carriage and conversation.

will be your crown and credit to prefer God before the world, to esteem holiness as the only beauty, and a title to the covenant as the only riches of your immortal soul.

Ye have both near and dear relations, whose hearts will rejoice in your perseverance and progress in the ways of God's commandments; that you may be helps to each other in the best things, provoke one another to love, and to good works, live long together on earth, and for ever together in heaven, is the prayer

Of your servant in the Lord,

George Swinnock.

THE INCOMPARABLENESS OF GOD,

IN HIS BEING, ATTRIBUTES, WORKS, AND WORD.

For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord?—Ps. lxxxix. 6.

CHAPTER I.

The preface and meaning of the text.

It is certain, that our happiness in the other world will consist in part in our perfect knowledge of the blessed and boundless God: when we shall 'know him as we are known of him,' we shall be blessed as he is blessed; and when 'we shall see him as he is, we shall be like him' in purity and felicity; we shall be fully satisfied with his likeness and his love. Rich must be the delight which the most large and noble faculty of man, his understanding, shall receive, in its intimate acquaintance with, and clear and full apprehension of, the highest truth. And it is as certain, that our holiness in this world doth not a little depend upon our knowledge of him, whose 'name alone is excellent.' None wander from him, prefer the flesh and world before him, and in their whole lives walk contrary to him, but from their ignorance of him. 'They are estranged from the life of God, (*i.e.*, a spiritual heavenly conversation,) through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts,' Eph. iv. 18. Dark corners of a house are filled with dust, dark cellars with vermin, and dark hearts with cursed lusts: none are enlarged in desires after God, or ravished with delight in God, or can cast their souls and all their concerns on God, but those that are acquainted with him. They who know his beauty and bounty, cannot but love him, and they who know his power and faithfulness, cannot but trust him; 'They who know thy name will put their trust in thee,' Ps. ix. 10. Whence comes it to

pass, that believers can trample on the riches and treasures, and wealth of this beggarly world, that they can lay their white and yellow earth, their silver and gold, at the apostles' feet, that they can suffer the spoiling of their goods, not only patiently, but joyfully, Heb. x. 34, but from the knowledge of him who is true riches, Luke xvi. 11; substance, Prov. viii. 21; an enduring substance, Job x. 34; a bottomless mine of unsearchable riches, Eph. iii. 8? Whence is it, that they can refuse to be called the sons of king's daughters, that they can contemn honours and preferments, spurn crowns and sceptres under their feet, but from the knowledge of him who is their crown of glory, their diadem of renown, and the praise of all his saints, Heb. xi. 24, 25? That which to the sensual worldling is so glorious, hath no glory in the believer's eye, by reason of the Lord of glory, who doth so infinitely excel. Whence is it, that they can hate father, mother, wife, child, liberty, yea, life itself, and leave all at the call and command of their Maker, but from the knowledge of him who is, as Elkanah said to Hannah, better to them than ten sons, than all relations, than the whole creation? Those stars vanish and disappear, when once the Sun of righteousness ariseth: how quickly, how quietly, without any hesitancy or reluctancy, will Abraham leave his country, and kindred, and father's house, when once 'the God of glory appeareth to him,' Acts ix. 2–4. In a word, whence is it that 'they escape the pollutions of the world,' in which others are mired, drowned, and destroyed, 'but through the knowledge of God,' 2 Pet. ii. 20? Well may our Lord Jesus say, 'It is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' To know God affectionately, as our chiefest good, so as to give him our superlative esteem, and intensest love, is spiritual life here, in the habit or principle, as also in the act and exercise of it; and it is the beginning, seed, preparation, and way of our eternal life hereafter. But who can know that being which infinitely passeth all knowledge? He that would know God fully, must be God himself; and he who would tell you what God is, in any measure answerable to his excellency, had need 'to know him as he is known of him.' And supposing I were able to speak of the perfection of God, as one that, like the great apostle, had been caught up 'into the third heavens:' I question whether, if I had a tongue to speak of him after that manner, ye had ears to hear of him, or hearts to understand what I should speak. But though I am not able to speak, nor you to hear of God, according to his perfection, yet through the assistance of the Holy Ghost so much may be spoken and heard of

him, as may tend to our present sanctification and future salvation. Though we cannot 'see him as he is,' yet we may see him as he is not; though the height of his being be above the reach of our understandings, we may get somewhat nearer to him, and indeed we have no other way while we are here, than by climbing upon the shoulders of all created excellencies, and there proclaiming, 'That none in the heavens is to be compared to the Lord, that none among the sons of the mighty is like unto the Lord.'

In the words, the Psalmist compareth God with, and preferreth God before, the highest, the greatest in heaven and earth.

In the words we have a comparison and a prelation.

1. A comparison, and this is between God and those that are most excellent in heaven, and the mightiest on earth.

2. A prelation, or preferring God before whatsoever is excellent in heaven or earth: the interrogation is a strong negation, as is frequent in Scripture, Prov. xx. 9; 'Who can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?' *i.e.*, none can say I have made my heart clean, or am pure from my sin; so Exod. xv. 11, 'Who is like to thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?' that is, none is like thee among the gods, none is so glorious in holiness, so fearful in praises, such a wonder-working God as thou art. Thus the Psalmist understandeth the text; 'For who in the heavens is to be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord?' *i.e.*, none in the heavens, none among the sons of the mighty on earth is comparable to Jehovah.

I shall first give you the meaning of the words, and then lay down the doctrine, which will be the foundation of my discourse on the subject.

For; this causal particle gives the reason why saints and angels should join together in the praise of God. 'The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord, thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints: *for* who in the heavens is to be compared to the Lord?' ver. 5. By the heavens, Calvin understandeth the holy angels, who rejoice in the church's welfare, and bless God for preserving his people, and performing his promises to them; and it is apparent by the apostle, that angels are present in the congregation of the saints, 1 Cor. xi. 11. And so this text addeth another ground for their admiration of the great God; viz., his incomparable excellency. His high and matchless perfections call for high and matchless praises. Others take the text as a ground for the confirmation of the Psalmist's faith in the covenant God had made

with him, mentioned verse 3, 4, namely, God's superiority over angels in heaven, and men on earth; therefore they cannot hinder him in the accomplishment of his word, being infinitely inferior to him.

Who in the heavens? Who in the sky? Ainsworth reads it. In the clouds, *in nubibus, œquabitur*, is to be equalled, saith Calvin, to Jehovah, *Quis enim in superiore nube par æstimetur Jehova.* Who in the higher clouds is equal to Jehovah, so Tremell. reads it.

Who in the heavens? *i.e.*, say some, in the starry heavens, among the celestial bodies, sun, moon, or stars; which were adored as gods, not only by the Persians, but also by some idolatrous Jews, because of their brightness and beauty, their lustre and glory. Which of all those famous lamps, and heavenly luminaries, is to be compared to the Father of lights, and Sun of righteousness? They may glister like glowworms in the night of paganism, among them who are covered with the mantle of darkness, but when this Sun ariseth, and day appeareth, they all vanish and disappear.

Who in the heavens? *i.e.*, say others, in the heaven of heavens, the highest, the third heavens, among the celestial spirits, cherubims and seraphims, angels and archangels, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions? Who among the innumerable company of angels? who among those pure, those perfect spirits, who are the ancientest, the honourablest house of the creation, is to be compared to the Father of spirits?

Though angels are glorious creatures, considered simply, and in themselves, in respect of their power, wisdom, purity, and beauty; yet if they be considered comparatively with the blessed God, I may say of them as the apostle doth of the Jewish worship, which was glorious, by reason of its divine institution, in comparison with the Christian worship: 2 Cor. iii. 10, 'Even that which was glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.'

Is to be compared to Jehovah? Is to be likened to Jehovah? Is to be equalled to Jehovah? Is to be put in the scales, and worthy to be weighed with Jehovah, that being of beings, that God of gods.

To Jehovah? This name Jehovah is the chief and most proper name of God. It is derived from *Haiah, fuit*, and signifieth that being which was, is, and is to come; which is always the same, and the cause of all other beings, Rev. i. 4, 6; Ps. cii. 28; Acts xvii. 28, and which gives a being to his word and promises. In heaven there is among glorious angels no such being.

Who amongst the sons of the mighty? Inter filios fortium. Who among the sons of the strong, Jun. reads it. Among the sons of the gods, saith Calvin; so the Seventy read it, and under-

stand, with the Chaldee paraphrase, angels, who are called sons of God, Job i. 6, and xxxviii. 7. But we, having understood angels, the best and highest in heaven, by the first interrogation, 'Who in the heavens is to be compared to the Lord?' it may be most convenient to understand in this place, by sons of the mighty, the best and highest on earth, the greatest and most gracious princes and potentates, who are higher by head and shoulders than others. These are called gods, and sons of the Most High, or Almighty, Ps. lxxxii. 6. And hereby the prophet challengeth both worlds, heaven and earth, to bring forth any that may equal or compare with Jehovah.

Can be likened to the Lord? Is such a being as he is, can speak, or act as he doth; is in any respect worthy to be named with him.

CHAPTER II.

God is incomparable; 1. *In his being.*

The doctrine which I shall raise out of the words is this, That God is incomparable; or, there is none among the highest, the holiest, in heaven or earth, like unto Jehovah. Take the greatest, the most excellent of beings in this or the other world, yet they come infinitely short of this being of beings: Ps. lxxxvi. 8, 'Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord.' Mark, the psalmist doth not choose a weak adversary for God to contend with and conquer, but the strongest. He doth not compare God with the meanest and lowest, but even with the highest, and prefers God before them. 'Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord.'

1. Among those that are gods by unjust usurpation, as evil angels are, who are called the princes of the powers of the air, Eph. ii. 2; and the gods of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Or, as antichrist, who 'exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; so that he as god sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God,' 2 Thes. ii. 4. Among these, there is none like unto thee, O Lord. These unclean beasts are unworthy to be mentioned with the high, the holy God.

2. Among those that are gods by men's erroneous persuasions and opinions, as idols, and those deities which the heathen worship, there is none like to thee, O Lord. 'Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands: They have mouths, but they speak not, eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not, neither speak

they through their throats,' Ps. cxv. 4–7. Idols are the work of the creatures, and their makers are infinitely below the Creator; therefore they themselves are much more. 'We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one,' 1 Cor. viii. 4. Though an idol be somewhat materially, yet it is nothing formally, as to the intent or purpose for which it is worshipped.

3. Among those that are gods by divine ordination, as angels,[1] Ps. viii. 5; magistrates, Ps. lxxxii. 6, who have the image of a deity stamped on them, in their authority and dominion over others, none is to be compared to Jehovah. These are gods by derivation, by deputation; as subordinate magistrates are commissionated by the supreme, and have a beam of his power communicated to them, but still remain weak creatures, limited by his precepts, and liable to his judgment. So angels and kings have some impressions of a deity on them, but their power is derivative from God, and limited by his will; yea, their essence is from him, their subsistence is by him, and their dependence is every moment upon him. Hence he is called the Most High: Ps. xcii. 1, 'O thou Most High.' Kings and princes are high, angels and archangels are higher; but Jehovah only is the Most High; Eccles. v. 8, 'He that is higher than the highest considereth.'

For the explication of this doctrine, the truth of it will be evident, if we consider the true God, and compare him with the highest and most excellent in heaven and earth.

1. In his being.
2. In his attributes.
3. In his works.
4. In his word.

1. God is incomparable in his being; God hath not only a being, but an excellency in his being; therefore he is called his excellency: 'Should not his excellency make you afraid,' Job xiii. 11. And he is said alone to be excellent: 'Thy name alone is excellent,' Ps. cxlviii. 13.

By name is meant sometimes anything whereby God makes himself known, Exod. xx. 7. But here the being of God, or God himself, as Prov. xviii. 10, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower'; *i.e.*, God himself is a strong tower: Ps. lxxvi. 1, 'His name is great in Israel;' *i.e.*, the being of the great God is magnified in his church, or among his chosen. Now his being alone is excellent, because there is no such being as his; there is no being excellent

[1] Minuisti illum paululum a deo.—*Calvin.*

besides his, because there is no being excellent like his. He is excellent in all, above all, and beyond all.

His being is such a being, that he alone is, and all besides are nonentities, and no beings in comparison of him. His name speaks the incomparable nature of his being. 'And God said unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent thee.' I Am, I, a being that really is, beside whom there is none, hath sent thee. What prince, what potentate can say I Am? What angel, what archangel can say I Am? No, this is the proper name of Jehovah.

Therefore, when he promiseth himself to be the reward of his people, he doth promise himself under the notion of essence, being, substance, in opposition to all others, which are but shadows and nothings to him. Prov. ii. 7, 'He layeth up sound wisdom (Heb., *essentiam*, essence) for the righteous.' Prov. viii. 21, 'I will cause them that love me to inherit substance.' Junius reads it, *Ut possideant id quod est*—I will cause them that love me to possess that which is. God is, and all other beings are not, in comparison of him; Dan. iv. 35, 'All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.' God is, and all others are nothing; yea, if it were possible to apprehend it, less than nothing. It is a notable expression of the Holy Ghost, to set forth the excellency of God's being; and the pitifulness, meanness, and nothingness of all other beings, Isa. xl. 15–17. Behold! (a note of attention and admiration) the nations (the Chaldeans, that are our lords and masters, or all nations of the world, be they never so high, great, strong, or glorious) are as the drop of a bucket (which falleth from the bucket, or hangeth on it, when the water is poured out, yet diminisheth not the measure,) and the small dust of the balance, (which cleaveth to the scales when the spice is put out, yet altereth not the weight, it is so little.) Behold! (wonder, be amazed at it,) he taketh up the isles, (the great, large, vast islands of the world,) as a very little thing, (as poor, small, inconsiderable things.) All nations before him are as nothing. Not only the great islands, but also the continents, with the several innumerable creatures in them, are not only little to this God, but as nothing, as no being to his being, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity. Put them in the scales with God, and they are not only light, and without any weight, nothing at all; but if men were capable of conceiving anything less than nothing, such were all the world to God. Though the world be absolutely somewhat, yea, very great, yet comparatively to God it is nothing, less than nothing and vanity.

CHAPTER III.

The incomparableness of God in his being. It is from itself, for itself, and wholly independent.

The incomparableness of the divine being will appear in several particulars.

1. His being is from himself. No being in the world, beside his, is its own cause or original. Angels, men, the highest, yea, the lowest creatures, are derivative beings. They have what they are from another, even from God. They are drops that flow from the ocean of all beings; they are rays derived from the sun, the fountain of light and entity. The apostle tells us that men are beholden to God for their beings, Acts xvii. 28. In him we have our beings. They were nothing till he spake them into something. He formed and fashioned their bodies, Ps. cxxxix. 13–15. He created and infused their souls; he put that heaven-born inhabitant into the house of clay, Gen. ii. 7; Job x. 11, 12. The whole visible world is his workmanship, Acts xvii. 24. God that made the world, and all things therein; the invisible world are also the effects of his powerful word. Angels, as well as men, may thank him for what they are. The greatest angel is as much bound to him for his being as the smallest atom; Col. i. 16, 'For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers.' But God is beholden to none for his being; he was when none else was, even from eternity, Ps. xc. 1. Therefore none could contribute the least to his being. I am Jehovah, and there is none else besides me, Isa. xlv. 5, 6. I am he that giveth a being to himself, that am what I am from myself and of myself, and there is no such being beside me.

2. God is being, that is, for himself;[1] as he is his own first cause, so he is his own last end; as he is wholly from himself, so he is wholly for himself. All other beings are not for themselves, but for another. 'All things were created by him and for him,' Col. i. 16. Since all are from God, it is but reason that all should be for God. The rivers that run from the sea return to the sea again, owning and acknowledging their original, Eccles. i. 7. Good men are for God. 'None of us liveth to himself, or dieth to himself; but whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; and whether we live or die, we are the

[1] Qu. "God's being, that is for himself"?—ED.

Lord's,' Rom. xiv. 7. Good angels are for God, for his glory, Isa. vi. 3. Evil men, evil angels are for God, though not in their intentions and purposes, yet in his intention, and by his wise, powerful government of them and their practices; Prov. xvi. 4, 'The Lord made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of slaughter.' Good beings are for him intentionally, and evil beings are for him eventually. Nay, all beings are for him; of him, and through him, and for him are all things, Rom. xi. 36. But God is altogether for himself, as his highest end, and not for any others. He is his own end, as well as his own beginning; who never had a beginning, nor shall ever have an end, Rev. i. 8. As all God doth is for himself; Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created;' so all God is, is for himself; he is[1] infinite, wise, almighty, everlasting, unchangeable, holy, righteous, faithful being, is for himself. It is the profaneness of some men to be somewhat for God, more for the world, and most of all for their carnal selves. But it is the perfection of God to be somewhat for the world in general, more for his elect in special, and most of all for himself. Nay, in all that he is for the world or his elect, he is still most for himself. It is the excellency and purity of saints and angels to be what they are, and to do what they do, for God, to make him who is the efficient, the final cause of their beings and actions; but it is the excellency and purity of God to be what he is, and to do what he doth, for himself. He who is his own happiness must be his own end.

3. His being is an independent being; he is by himself, as well as from and for himself; none ever in heaven or earth contributed the least towards the maintenance or continuance of his being; neither the creatures' goodness nor their goods do him the least good. Not their goodness; men may be advantaged by the goodness of men, but God cannot: 'My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are on earth,' Ps. xvi. 3. Not their goods; he is the lord proprietor of the whole world, and if he wanted anything he would not ask the leave of any; for all is his own, but he is above all want: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof,' Ps. l. 12—*i.e.*, I declare to the world that I am incapable of the least want; or if I needed a meal's meat, I would scorn to go to the creature's door to beg it. I could supply myself out of my own store, if there were need; but there is no need at all. He challengeth all the world to produce any being that ever obliged or engaged him in the least: 'Who

[1] Qu. "his"?—ED.

hath prevented me that I may repay him?' Job xli. 11. Where is the man, where is the angel, where is the creature that can say, he ever did me the least kindness, that hath been beforehand with me in courtesy, to whom I am the least in debt for my subsistence? I am here ready to make him amends; 'Who hath prevented me, that I may repay him?'

But all other beings are dependent; the highest, the strongest of them are not able to bear their own weight; but, like the hop or ivy, must have somewhat to lean upon: 'By him all things subsist,' Col. i. 17. He preserveth them in their beings and in their motions: 'In him we live and move, and have our beings,' Acts xvii. 28. As the beams depend on the sun, and the streams on the fountain, so do the creatures for their beings and actions depend on God. 'He upholdeth all things' (as the foundation the building) 'by the word of his power,' Heb. i. 3. He is the Atlas that bears up the whole world, without whom it would fall to nothing. 'Thou preservest man and beast,' Ps. xxxvi. 6. *Dependentia est de essentia creaturæ.*

God is to the world as the soul to the body; he animates and actuates every thing in it, and enableth his several creatures to all their motions. Men are apt to think that fire can burn of itself, it being so natural to the fire to burn; yet if God do but suspend his influence, (*actum secundum*, as they speak,) a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual burns no more than water, Dan. iii. 27. We are ready to conceive that it is easy for a man to see, when the organ is rightly disposed, there is a fit medium, and a due distance of the organ from the object. But yet, if God deny his concurrence, though there are these three requisites to sight, a man can see no more than if he were stark blind, Gen. xix. 11; 2 Kings vi. 18.

Angels themselves must have their Maker for their mover; or, as active spirits as they are, they must stand still.

CHAPTER IV.

God incomparable in his being, as he is absolutely perfect, universal, unchangeable.

4. He is an absolutely perfect being. There is a twofold perfection compatible to beings. Some are perfect in their kind; that is, have all things requisite to that species of which they are. So we say the world is perfect, because it hath all things needful to a world.

A man is a perfect man, that hath a body with all its parts and members, and a soul with all its powers and faculties. But secondly, A being is absolutely perfect, when nothing can be added to it, or taken from it, when it is incapable of the least accession or diminution. Now such a being is God, and none but God. As the sun gets nothing by the shining of the moon and the stars, neither loseth anything by their eclipses or withdrawing; so the self-sufficient God gains nothing by all the suits and services, prayers and praises of his creatures; neither loseth anything by their neglect of their duties. He is above the influence of all our performances; our holiness addeth not the least to his happiness: 'Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?' Job xxii. 2, 3. He is beyond the malice of sin. As holiness doth not help him, so the sin of his creatures doth not hurt him. All those darts of sin which the wicked shoot up against heaven, fall short, and fall down upon their own heads: 'If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the sons of men,' Job xxxv. 6–8. Flesh and blood may be injured and pierced by the weapons of unrighteousness; but not the Rock of ages; that is impenetrable. They who are of the same make and mould with ourselves may be advantaged by our blessings and praises, but not he who is above all blessing and praises.

What doth the great light of the world get by the Persian's admiration and adoration of it? What is a fountain the better if men drink of its water, and commend it; or the worse if men pass by, and despise it? What would God get, if he should make millions of worlds to laud and magnify him? or what would God lose, if there were no world, no creature at all? 'Who hath given to him, and it shall be recompensed again?' Rom. xi. 35. He hath given to all whatever they are, or have; but none ever gave to him. They who give to him their love, and fear, and trust, and names, and estates, give nothing to him. We can give nothing to him, to whom we owe all. Besides, all we have, and are, and do, and suffer for him, addeth nothing to him. His declarative glory may, but his essential glory, or glorious essence, admits not in the least of any increase or decrease. But no other being is absolutely perfect. Men are exceeding imperfect since their fall. They are so far from

being above all additions that they stand in continual need of additions. They need the air to breathe in, the earth to bear them, food to strengthen them, raiment to cover them, fire to warm them, sleep to refresh them; they want righteousness to justify them, the Holy Ghost to sanctify them, love to comfort them, and mercy to save them. Man is an heap of infirmities, an hospital of diseases, and a bundle of imperfections. He is so far from being absolutely perfect, that, in a moral consideration, since his apostasy, he is not perfect in his kind. And though angels are more perfect than men, yet they are imperfect to God. Angels, it is true, are perfect in their kind, but not perfect in all kinds; something may be added to them, something may be taken from them. The highest angel may be higher, and the holiest angel may be holier, and the best of them may be better. Though the stars differ from each other in brightness and glory, yet none of them is a sun. Though angels differ from men, and each from others in honour and excellency; yet none of them is a god, none of them is absolutely perfect.

5. God is an universal being, he hath all good eminently and virtually in himself. Whatsoever excellencies are scattered and dispersed among the creatures in heaven or in earth, they are all united in, and centered after an infinite manner in the Creator. It is a true rule in philosophy, *Quod efficit tale est magis tale*, Whatsoever good is in the effect, is more abundantly in the cause. Now God being the principle and cause of all the good and excellency that is in every creature, it must of necessity be more abundantly in him. As some potions have the quintessence of many herbs, many drugs in them; so God hath the quintessence of all creatures, and infinitely more in him.

For this cause he is called by, and compared to, whatsoever is good and answerable, either to necessity, conveniency, or delight. Sometimes to that good which is necessary; as to life, John i. 4; to the fountain of life, Ps. xxxvi. 9; to light, John i. 9; to the Father of lights, James i. 19; to food, as to bread, yea, living bread, John vi. 51; to water, yea, living water, John iv. 10; to rest, 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,' Ps. cxvi. 7. He is the only ark wherein alone the dove, wearied about the waters of this world, can find rest. Sometimes he is compared to that good which is convenient; as to a habitation, Ps. xc. 9, 10; 'O Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place from all generations.' To health, Ps. xlii. 11–17; to peace, 2 Cor. xiii. 11; to protection or defence, as a shield, which defends the body from the shot or thrusts of men, Gen. xv. 1; to a wall of fire, which defends

the traveller from the fury of beasts, Zech. ii. 5; to a refuge, which secures the army, when it is foiled by the enemy, Ps. lvii. 1; to a rock, a fortress, a high tower, Ps. xviii. 2; sometimes he is compared to that good which is delightful; as to riches, Job xxii. 24, 25; to unsearchable riches, Eph. iii. 8; durable riches, Prov. viii. 18; to honour and glory, as a royal diadem; he is called a glorious Lord, Isa. xxxiii. 21; said to be the glory in the midst of his people, Zech. ii. 5; to joy and pleasure, Ps. xliii. 4; to relations, he is a father, 2 Cor. vi. 18; an husband, Hosea ii. 19; to a feast of fat things, of marrow and fatness, of wine, of wine on the lees well refined, Isa. xxv. 6; which are the delight of the palate; to beauty, which is the delight of the eyes, Cant. v. 10-16; to sweet smells, which are the delight of the nostrils, Cant. iv. 10, and i. 3; to the most harmonious music, which is the delight of the ears: his mouth is most sweet, or sweetnesses, Cant. v. 16; 'My soul failed when he spake,' so ravishing was his voice, Cant. v. 6; to truth, which is the delight of the understanding, Ps. xxxi. 5; John xiv. 6; to good, which is the delight of the will, Mat. xix. 17. Thus God is not one good, but all good. The truth is, all the good, all the excellencies that are in men or angels, are not worthy to be a shadow, or foil to set off those excellencies that are in God. All good is in one God, Mark x. 29, 30. But creatures are but particular beings. Man is but a particular being, a low limited being: 'What is man, that is a worm; or the son of man, that is a worm?' Job xxv. 6. There is some good in one man, and some good in another man; but not all good in any man; no, not in all men. Angels are but particular beings, little beings. One angel is one drop, another angel another drop, a third angel a third drop; every one is but a drop. None of them is an ocean, as God is, which containeth all those drops, and infinitely more.

6. God is an unchangeable being, not only without, but incapable of the least alteration. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8. He is what he was, and what he will be eternally. He is the same since the world was made that he was before the world, and that he will be when this world shall be no more: 'With him is not the least variation, or shadow of turning,' James i. 17. No παραλλαγὴ, or variableness. It is an astronomical word, taken from the heavenly bodies, which suffer many declensions and revolutions, which they call parallaxes. Though those heavenly lights are variable, have their increases and decreases, their times of rising and setting; yet our Father of lights is not variable. He knoweth no rising or setting, no increasing or de-

creasing; but shineth always with the same light and lustre, with the same beauty and brightness; nor shadow of turning, *τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα.* The lesser luminaries or stars, according to their different postures, have divers shadowings or adumbrations, according to their nearness to, or distance from the sun, their shadows are greater or lesser; but our sun is still the same, knoweth no clouding, no shadowing, no eclipsing. When God hates those angels as apostates, whom first he loved, as created pure and holy, he is still the same; the change is not in God, but in them. Bring clay to the sun, it hardens it; bring wax to the sun, with the same influence, it softens it, without any alteration in the sun. When God punisheth a man that is wicked, and prospereth the same man becoming a penitent, he is still the same. If a man walk on one side of a church, the pillars are on his left hand; if on the other side, on his right hand. The pillars remain where they were, the motion or change is in the man.

But creatures are all mutable; the heavens seem constant, but it is in inconstancy; their perpetual motion speaks their perpetual alteration: Ps. cii. 26, 27, 'They shall perish, but thou shalt endure, they shall wax old as a garment,' that is, wearing out, and wasting every day; 'as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed, but thou, Lord, art the same for ever.' The old heavens will pass away, and new ones succeed in their room at the general conflagration, but the God of heaven will never pass away. Man is ever in motion, from one condition to another. His body changeth in its age, constitution, temper; at last into rottenness, dust and corruption: 'I have said to corruption, thou art my father; and to the worms, ye are my brother and sister,' Job xvii. 14. His soul changeth in its passions, affections; love, hatred, delights, desires: his whole man changeth in its place, company, carriage, conversation: he hath no consistency while he is, he continueth not what he was, Job xiv. 2, 3. Angels are changeable; even the good angels, though not as men, yet as creatures; as perfect as they are, they have this imperfection. 1. They are who once were not, and, in regard of themselves, have a possibility not to be. 2. Angels may lose what they have, and attain what they have not. 3. Angels are mutable in regard of place, sometimes in heaven, sometimes on earth. What little unchangeableness is in angels, is derivative, God is the original of it; their immutability at most is but from their creation, I suppose some time since; for the good angels as well as bad were created mutable, but God's immutability is from eternity. The whole world indeed is a sea of glass, Rev. iv.

6, always ebbing and flowing, never at a stay; but the maker of the world may well say, 'I the Lord change not,' Mal. iii. 6.

CHAPTER V.

God incomparable in his being, as it is eternal and without composition.

7. God is an eternal being, and none is eternal but he. Time, which hath a beginning and end, is compatible to men, and other visible creatures in this world. *Æviternity*, which hath a beginning and no end, is compatible to good and evil angels, and to the souls of men; but *eternity*, which hath no beginning, succession or end, belongs only to God.

1. God hath no beginning: he who 'in the beginning created the heavens and the earth,' could have no beginning himself,' Gen. i. 1. 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world; from everlasting to everlasting thou art God,' Ps. xc. 2. God is eternal, *a parte ante*, and puzzleth most enlarged understanding to conceive his duration. 'Behold he is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out,' Job xxxvi. 26, Ps. xciii. 2.

2. God hath no succession in his duration; he dwelleth in one indivisible point of eternity; he is what he is in one infinite moment of being; his duration knoweth nothing of former or latter, past or to come; his essence is not bounded by those hedges, but he enjoyeth his whole eternity every moment; hence he is said to 'inhabit eternity,' to be fixed always in eternity, Isa. lvii. 15. Time is *nunc fluens*, but eternity is *nunc stans:* 'One day with him is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,' 2 Pet. iii. 8. He inhabits a million of years in a moment, and each moment to him is as a million of years. He hath not the least added to his duration since the world was, though it hath been near six thousand years: it is not proper to say of him, he was, for none of his duration is ever past with him, or he shall be, for none of his duration is ever to come; but he is, his full eternity is always present, hence his name is I Am, Exod. iii. 14. Not I was, or shall be; and Christ tells the Jews, 'Before Abraham was, I Am,' John viii. 58. It seems false grammar, but it is the most proper true divinity. Indeed, had Adam been then alive, it had been proper for him to have said, before Abraham was, I was; or if an angel had spoken,

it had been proper for him to have said, before Abraham was, I was; because men and angels enjoy their being by piecemeals, now a little and then a little, somewhat of their duration is gone, and somewhat to come; but it was most proper for him that was God to say, before Abraham was, I Am, because his duration is without all succession, the whole of it is ever present. The psalmist further clears this, 'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee,' Ps. ii. 7; which words are interpreted of the eternal generation of the Son of God before all worlds, and also of his resurrection in time, which was to be some hundreds of years after, as the apostle either expounds it, or alludes to it, Acts xiii. 33. But it is all one, for both are to-day; that which was from eternity, and that which was to be many hundred of years after, are both with him present this day.

Past or future is all present this day; that was not past to God which never had beginning, his son's eternal generation; nor was that to come to God which was always before him, his son's temporal resurrection. It is still, 'This day have I begotten thee;' millions of years, yea, of ages, add not the least moment to his duration.

3. God hath no ending: as he is from, so he is to everlasting, Ps. xc. 2. 'Without beginning or end of days,' Ps. cii. 27. 'But thou art the same, and thy years never end.' O what an excellent being is this eternal being? 'He only hath immortality,' 1 Tim. vi. 16. And he is eternity itself, 1 Sam. xv. 29. *Æternitas Israelis*, Jun. The eternity of Israel cannot lie.

But are men or angels comparable to God in this? Surely no. As for man, he is a bird of time, here to-day and gone to-morrow, Job xiv. 1. Of few days: 'As for man, his days are as grass,' Ps. ciii. 15; now flourishing, but quickly perishing.

Man hath a beginning, succession, and ending. There was a time when man was not; man enjoyeth his time by parts and parcels, and man ere long shall be no more. All men in this are alike, high or low, good or bad. There is a vast difference between God and all men in their duration. 'Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's years?' Job x. 5. No, in no respect. Man's days begin, succeed, and end; not so God's days. Well might David say, though he had lived as long as Methusaleh, 'Mine age is nothing unto thee,' Ps. xxxix. 5. And truly as men are far from being comparable to God, so are angels. Angels had a beginning, Col. i. 16. Angels have a succession in their duration; they enjoy part to-day, part to-morrow, part the next day;

every moment addeth to their duration; what is past they do not enjoy, nor what is to come, but only what is present; and thus it is also with souls of saints in heaven.

8. God is a simple being. In this I take simplicity, not as opposed to wisdom, for in him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 9, but as simplicity is opposed to mixture and composition. Thus there is a simplicity in the gospel, 2 Cor. xii. 3. So anything, the more simple it is, the more excellent it is. God is a most pure, simple, unmixed, indivisible essence; he is incapable of the least composition, and therefore of the least division. He is one most pure, one without all parts, members, accidents, and qualities. Whatsoever is in him is himself, his very being; therefore, that which is a quality in a man or angel, is attributed to God in the abstract. Men and angels are wise, but God is wisdom, Prov. ix. 1. Men and angels are holy, but God is holiness, Isa. lxiii. 15. God is all essence, all being, and nothing else.

But how unlike are men or angels to God in this! Man is a grossly compounded being; he is compounded of a body and a soul, Gen. ii. 7. His body is compounded of members and parts; his members and parts are compounded of bones, and blood, and flesh, and skin, and sinews, Job x. 11. His soul is compounded, and so are the highest angels, of substance and accidents, of essence and faculties; the substance of man's soul, and of angels and their qualities, are distinct things. Their wisdom is one thing, their power another thing, their holiness a third thing, and all distinct from their essence. An angel may be an angel, and a man may be a true man, and yet be foolish, weak, and wicked. Their understanding differeth from their wills, their wills differ from their affections, their affections differ from both, and all from their beings. But in God all these are one indivisible essence, to will and to understand, and to love and to hate, and to be, are all the same and one in God.

CHAPTER VI.

God incomparable in his being, as it is infinite and incomprehensible.

9. God is an infinite being. He is a being that knoweth no bounds, no limits. His being is without all measure, all degrees and determinations. His understanding, *i.e.*, himself, who is all understanding, is infinite, Ps. cxlvii. 5. God is a sphere, whose

centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. 'Behold the heavens, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built,' 1 Kings viii. 27. The starry heavens, or firmament, is large; it compasseth the whole earth and ocean; this terrestrial world is but a point to it; but the heaven of heavens, or the imperial heaven, is larger; it containeth the lower heaven, but cannot contain the God of heaven. No *ubi*, no place can define or circumscribe him. He is neither shut up in any place nor shut out of any place. He is above place, without place, yet in all places. 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, (heaven and hell are most opposite places,) behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me,' Ps. cxxxix. 7–10. God is in heaven, earth, sea, hell, and infinitely more, where there is neither heaven, nor earth, nor sea, nor hell.

Oh, what a being is the blessed God, who is boundless not only in his duration, of which we have spoken before, and in all his perfections and attributes, of which we shall speak hereafter, but also in his essence and being! No place can circumscribe him, and no *ubi* can define him. 'He is over all' creatures by his power and dominion; 'in you all,' by his essence and influence; 'and through all,' by his providence, Eph. iv. 6. He is everywhere, not only virtually, as the sun by his beams; nor authoritatively, as a king by subordinate officers; not at all by multiplication, as the loaves filled that place, which they did not before the miracle; or by extension, as the rational creature filleth that place when a man, which he did not when an infant; nor by local motion, from one place to another, as all bodily animate creatures; or by division, as our bodies are part in one place and part in another; or by commixtion, as the air mingleth itself with the terrestrial world; but essentially after an unspeakable manner. As philosophers say of the soul, it is whole in the whole body, and whole in every part of the body; so I may say of God, he is whole in the whole world, and whole in every part of the world; yea, if he should please to make ten thousand worlds, he would fill all, and his whole essence be in every part of each world, and yet without the least extension, or multiplication, or motion.

But are men or angels like to God in this?[1] Alas, they are finite,

[1] Homo est in loco circumscriptive, angelus definitive, Deus repletive.

limited beings, less than drops to this ocean. Man is in a small place, so as to fill it up by commensuration of parts, and to exclude all other bodies; but himself is circumscribed in it. Angels, though they are not in a place so as to exclude bodies, yet they are in a *ubi*, or space, so as to conclude themselves therein; they are in a finite compass, beyond which their being extendeth not; they are so here that they are not there; so in heaven that they are not on earth at the same time. But God is everywhere in his whole essence every moment; 'he filleth all in all,' Eph. i. 23.

10. God is an incomprehensible being, such a being as no creature, whether man or angel, can comprehend or perfectly understand. This floweth from the former; if he be infinite, he must of necessity be incomprehensible; for a finite being, as all are beside himself, can never comprehend what is infinite. There is no proportion between a boundless being and a bounded understanding. But there must be a proportion between the mind of the creature and that object which is fully understood by it. The sun may be contained in a small chink, and the sea in a nut-shell, sooner than God can be contained in the limited understanding of men or angels: Job xxvi. 14, 'Lo, these are parts of his ways,' viz., 'hell is naked before him,' ver. 6. 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing,' ver. 7. 'He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them,' ver. 8. 'He hath compassed the waters with bounds,' ver. 10. 'The pillars of heaven tremble at his reproof,' ver. 11, &c.; 'but how little a portion is heard of him!' The vulgar read it, how little a drop; others, a whisper, or smallest part of a voice; that which is known of God, to that which God is, and is in God, is but like a drop to the vast ocean, and as a whisper to a loud terrible thunder. 'How little a portion is heard of him.' Surely much is heard of him, from the voice of his almighty works of creation and providence, and especially from the voice of his word and his own mouth in the Holy Scriptures. But how little is heard of him in comparison of that immense excellency which is in him, and which he is. Heathens hear somewhat of him, Rom. i. 20, 21. His saints on earth hear much more of him, Ps. lxiii. 3–6. Perfect spirits in heaven hear most of all of him, 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Yet by all these a very little portion is heard of him.

The being of God is like the peace of God, 'which passeth all understanding,' Phil. iv. 7. And like the love of Christ, 'which passeth all knowledge,' Eph. iii. 19. This only can be known of God, that he can never be known fully; and this only can be com-

prehended of him, that he cannot be comprehended: 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea,' Job xi. 8, 9. 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' it is as trong negation, *i.e.*, it is impossible by all the help and advantage of nature and art, and grace and diligence, yea, and perfect glory too, to find out God fully. Dost thou, a poor mean vile man, saith Zophar, think to contain and comprehend him, whom the heavens, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain or comprehend? Art thou so silly as to conceive that the short line of thy understanding should fathom his bottomless being? It is not in vain for thee to seek him, but it is altogether in vain for thee to search him. Though he be not far from thee, yet he is far above thee, and far beyond thee; far above thy thoughts, and beyond thy conceptions: he 'dwelleth in that light that is inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see,' 1 Tim. vi. 16. They who see him face to face, *i.e.*, most clearly and fully, see but little of him; clouds and darkness are in this sense ever about him. As in a dark day we see the beams, but not the body of the sun; so even in heaven the highest angels rather see his rays and beams than his infinite being.

'Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?' Men who seek God may find him, Prov. viii. 17; Mat. vii. 7; but they cannot find him to perfection: the word for perfection signifieth the height or utmost accomplishment of a thing. Somewhat of God may be known, but not all; they who find out most are far from finding out the utmost of him. The sun and all the celestial lights may sooner be grasped in the hollow of man's hand, and the vast hills and mountains weighed in a pair of common scales, than the Almighty 'found out to perfection.' Natural questions soon pose the most learned men; the forms even of inanimate creatures are riddles to most. How frequently do the greatest scholars betake themselves to secret sympathies and antipathies, and occult qualities, as the cloak and cover of their ignorance: Eccles. xi. 5. 'Canst thou know how the bones grow of her that is with child? O how much more must divine questions exceed human understanding.

'It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do?' It is as the highnesses of heaven: take all the heights and elevations, all the spheres and altitudes of heaven, and try if thou canst reach them with thy short arm; yea, climb up the highest storeys, the loftiest

pinnacles, touch, if thou canst, the several orbs; yet the knowledge of this God, or this God the object of knowledge, is above and beyond all. What a fool would he be thought, who should undertake to ascend the starry heavens; yet he who would find out God to perfection, must climb much higher. The heavens are famous for their height; yea, the starry heavens, that some wonder that the eyes of man are not tired before they reach them, Prov. xxv. 3, 'The heavens for height, and the earth for depth,' yet the third heavens are much higher than they; but the most high God is far higher than the highest heavens.

'Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?' Heaven and hell are at the greatest distance, and are most remote from our apprehensions. Who knoweth what is done in heaven? what in hell? what is enjoyed in the one, or suffered in the other? No more can any know what God is. Who knoweth the nature, number, order, motions, influence of the heavenly bodies; something is conjecturally delivered about them, nothing certain; much less doth any know the number, nature, order, wonder, worship of the celestial courtiers in the third heavens, of the thousand thousand that are before God, the ten thousand times ten thousand that minister to him; least of all can any know that being that made all these, that preserveth all these, that ordereth and governeth, animateth and actuateth all these; that gives them all that they are, and enableth them to all that they do.

'Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?' Who knoweth the mines and minerals which lie in the bosom, in the bowels of the earth? Who knoweth the place of sapphires, the coral, the pearls, and the precious onyx? Job xxviii. 5–8. 'Out of the earth cometh bread, &c. The stones of it are the place of sapphires, and it hath dust of gold. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.' Much less doth any know the miseries of the damned, the extremity, universality, eternity of their torments. Who ever returned from that place, to tell us what they suffered there; or if they had, whose understanding is large enough to conceive them? 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger? according to thy fear, so is thy wrath,' Ps. xc. 11. Least of all can any know that God, who setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection; the stones of darkness and the shadow of death, Job xxviii. 3: before whom hell and destruction are naked and open; who formeth the costly jewels, secret from the eyes of covetous mortals, who layeth the dark vault of hell, and storeth it

with fire and brimstone, and gnawing worms, and blackness of darkness, and all the instruments of eternal death.

'The measure thereof is longer than the earth:' the earth is long, from one end of it to another. Mathematicians tell us, from east to west, it is twenty-two thousand miles, but the knowledge of God is much longer; the measure thereof is beyond all measure.

'And broader than the sea:' the ocean is exceeding broad, it seems to them that sail on it to be without banks or bounds. Hence we read of the arms of the sea, Dan. xi. 22, because of its breadth. And David calls it, Ps. civ. 25, a great and wide sea; 'So is this great and wide sea wherein are things innumerable, both small and great.' But the knowledge of the great God is far greater and wider: how are the dimensions of height, depth, length and breadth, in their greatest extent and dimensions, obvious to human understandings? The heavens are high, yet their height is finite: hell is deep, yet its depth is determined; the earth is long, yet its length is limited; the sea is broad, yet its breadth is bounded: but God is infinite, boundless, and beyond all these.

CHAPTER VII.

God incomparable in his attributes, in his holiness, and wisdom.

II. God is incomparable, as in his being, so in his attributes. The attributes of God are those perfections in the divine nature which are ascribed to him, that we might the better understand him. They are so called, *i.e.*, attributes, because they are attributed to him for our sakes, though they are not in him as they are in men or angels. *Vocantur attributa, quia ea sibi attribuit Deus nostra causa*, Zanch de Attribut., lib. ii. cap. 12. *Attributa Dei dicuntur quæ Deo adscribuntur in Scripturis sacris, non tam ad essentiam naturamque Dei explicandam, quam ad declarandum nobis aliquo modo pro nostro captu illud quod de ipso a nobis cognosci potest*, Polan.Syntag., lib. ii. cap. 6. There are some attributes of God which the schoolmen call incommunicable, (which I have spoken of under the former head,) because the creature, as a creature, is uncapable of them, and therefore they cannot be attributed to man or angels. It is impossible for a creature to be independent, self-sufficient, eternal in a strict sense, infinite, &c., so that all will acknowledge God incomparable in those excellencies. There are other attributes of God which are called communicable,

viz., his power, holiness, wisdom, faithfulness, &c., because they are communicated by him to his rational creatures, and there is some show or shadow of them in men and angels. For though it was the horrible pride, and monstrous presumption of evil angels, and Adam, at first to rival God in his properties that were incommunicable—to aspire to be like him in his independency and sovereignty; for their sin was, that they would have cut off the entail, and have held all of themselves, as their own lords and masters; and the Prince of Tyre, Ezek. xxviii. 6, is indicted by God of inexpiable arrogancy, 'that he durst set his heart as the heart of God:' yet it is the only godliness of the creature to be like God, in those attributes of his which are communicable. The new man is after God, Eph. i. 24, the re-impression of his image on the creature. David is therefore called a man after God's own heart, because he was a man after God's own holiness; yea, it is the perfection and felicity of the intellectual world (Ps. xvii. 15; 1 John iii. 3, 4) in heaven.

But even in these properties wherein man resembleth his Maker, he is exceedingly unlike him, and falls infinitely short of him. That God is incomparable in his communicable attributes, I shall discover—1. More generally; 2. More specially.

1. More generally; and here I shall enumerate some of those attributes wherein men and angels are conformable to God, and in each of them shew that in those in which they come nearest to him, they come far behind.

(1.) He is incomparable in his holiness. Holiness in general is the moral goodness of a thing, or its conveniency or agreement with its rule. Holiness in the creatures is their conformity to the will of their Creator in the principle, rule, and end of their actions and motions. Holiness in God is that excellency of the divine nature by which he acteth from himself, for himself, and according to his own will.

God is the holy One, Hosea xi. 9, by way of eminency and excellency, because he surpasseth all others in holiness. He is the holy One of Jacob, Isa. xlix. 23; the holy One of Israel, Isa. xliii. 14, because of their special interest and propriety in the excellent being. He is 'holy, holy, holy,' Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8. His nature is the only pattern of holiness, therefore he commands us to look on him as our example: 'Be ye holy as I am holy,' 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. Man was made holy, Eccles. vii. 29, *i.e.*, according to the image of God, Gen. i. 26; Eph. iv. 24. His will is the only rule of holiness. Hence our holiness is called a proving his good and

perfect and acceptable will, Rom. xii. 2, and our fulfilling the will of God, Acts xiii.; and a walking according to his word, which is his revealed will, as our rule, Gal. vi. 16. He is universally holy in his name, Luke i. 49; in his nature, Ps. v. 5, 6; Hab. i. 13; in his works, Ps. cxlv. 17; in his word, Rom. vii. 12; Ps. cxix. 140. He is the original of all holiness in men or angels; they are beholden to him that they are not as unholy as the damned, as the devils, James i. 17; Ezek. xxxvii. 28, and xxxviii. 26, 27; 1 Thes. v. 23. Now what man or angel is comparable to him in holiness? May I not with Moses make a challenge—'Who is a god like unto thee, glorious in holiness?' Exod. xv. 11.

Are men holy as he is holy? Nay, are the spirits of just men made perfect, and angels, equal to him in holiness? 'Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints, (the best on earth;) the heavens (the holiest there) are unclean in his sight,' Job xv. 15, 16. As for man, he is a sink of sin, a sty of filth, overspread from head to foot with the leprosy of sin, Gen. vi. 5; and therefore, instead of comparing with God for holiness, is bound to abhor himself for his unholiness; yea, angels, who have nothing amiss in their natures, who never took one step awry in their lives, who have ever continued God's loyal subjects and faithful servants, observant of all his calls, and obedient to all his commands—whose obedience to him, and observance of him, is made the copy for us to write after, Mat. vi. 10—are yet unholy in comparison of God. 'The heavens are unclean in his sight.' The heavens, not only the place, which hath a relative holiness, in regard of God's special presence; but even the persons in heaven, perfect spirits, who have no blemish in their beings, or disorder in their motions, are unholy to him, and unclean in his sight. The holiness of angels is but the holiness of *obeying* a law, Ps. ciii. 20, 21; the holiness of God is the holiness of *being* a law, 1 Thes. iv. 3. The holiness of angels is but a conformity to the pattern set them; the holiness of God is the holiness of setting them a pattern, and of being their pattern. The holiness of angels is but a derivative, God's is an original holiness.

God is so incomparable in holiness that it is said, he only, or solely, is holy, Rev. xv. 4, 'Who will not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.' None is holy besides him, because none is holy like him; 1 Sam. ii. 2, 'There is none holy as the Lord,' therefore none holy but the Lord: saints are holy, 1 Pet. ii. 9; angels are holy, Mark viii. 38; but they are not holy as the Lord is holy. Without question, the heavenly host, who see him face to face, and are satisfied with his likeness, are glorious

in holiness, shine brightly with those perfect beams, and that pure light which they borrow from the Sun of righteousness; but truly they are poor glow-worms to the Father of lights. Even that grace, that holiness, that glory of saints and angels which infinitely surpasseth the natural heavens in all their beauty and brightness, is no grace, no holiness, no glory in this respect, by reason of that grace and holiness and glory in God, which doth so infinitely excel.

(2.) God is incomparable in his wisdom, (I shall not stand upon the critical distinctions which some give between understanding, prudence, and wisdom:) wisdom in general is a right understanding of things, and the ordering ourselves and actions suitable to that understanding. It appears chiefly in these three acts: 1. In discerning the nature, causes, effects, contraries, and consequents of things, (of which we shall speak hereafter;) and this we call science. 2. In propounding the best, and highest, and noblest end to ourselves in our actions and undertakings; and this is called understanding. 3. In suiting and fitting and ordering the most proper means as may be best for the attaining our ends; and this is called prudence, which, as the rudder of the ship, steers and directs and governs all. In all these respects God is incomparable in wisdom: 'he is wise in heart,' Job ix. 4, *i.e.*, most wise; for the heart is the seat of wisdom; and to be foolish, and without an heart, is all one: 'Ephraim is a silly dove, without a heart,' Hosea vii. 11. There are in God 'all the treasures of wisdom,' Col. i. 19.

A treasure denotes, 1. Preciousness; a heap of dust or coals is not a treasure, but of silver and gold. 2. Plenty; one or two pieces of things that are precious will not make a treasure, there must be a heap, or some quantity. In God there is the most precious wisdom, therefore called counsel, the effect of serious and mature deliberation; and he is called the Mighty Counsellor, Eph. i. 11; Isa. ix. 6. In God there is plenty of it, treasures; a treasure notes abundance, but treasures speak superabundance, a redundance. In God are all the treasures, all kinds, all sorts of wisdom, πολυποίκιλος σοφία, manifold wisdom, Eph. iii. 10, embroidered wisdom, wherein is all variety of rich and curious contrivances. These are all in God; he engrosseth them all in himself; therefore you read, 'With him is wisdom and understanding,' Job xii. 13; with him, as with its master and sovereign lord; with him, as with its sole owner and proprietor.

Some men are wise; light and understanding, and excellent wisdom, was found in Daniel, Dan. v. 14. David was very wise, wiser than his teachers, than his enemies, than the ancient, Ps. cxix. 97–99. Solomon

was a wise man, he exceeded in wisdom all that were before, and all that came after him: 'And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea-shore; and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt, for he was wiser than all men, than Ethan and Heman,' &c., 1 Kings iv. 29–31. But was Solomon comparable to God in wisdom? Truly, he that was wiser than all men was a stark fool to God; the wisdom of man is foolishness with God, 1 Cor. iii. 19. The subtility of the heathen, and, I may say, the greatest understanding of the Christian, is folly with God: 'The foolishness of God is wiser than man,' 1 Cor. i. 25. If it were possible that there should be anything in God which might look like folly, or if it were lawful for us to conceive any action of God's, which, compared with his deeper contrivances, might have a show of foolishness, yet even this were wiser than the greatest wisdom of man. Angels are wiser than men. When the woman would speak David to be very wise above the rate of mortals, she saith, 'My lord is wise as an angel of God,' 2 Sam. xiv. 20. The excellency of their natures speaks the excellency of their wisdom, for it is the understanding that is the chief distinguishing faculty. But are angels like God in wisdom? No, they are fools to him: 'Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants, he chargeth his angels with folly,' Job iv. 18. Though they never thwarted the divine pleasure, nor in any action manifested the least imprudence; yet before him they are indicted of folly, and to him will be proved guilty of it. Though they are not chargeable with actual, yet they are with potential folly; though God doth not indict them of absolute, yet he doth of comparative folly.

God doth so far exceed angels and men in wisdom that he is said only to be wise: 'To the only wise God,' 1 Tim. i. 17; 'To God only wise,' Rom. xvi. 27. None are wise beside him, because none are wise to him, Dan. v. 20. Wisdom is his, his peculiar, his prerogative, his wholly, his only; so his that it is none's but his.

The wisest men and angels stand in need of a master to teach them, and a tutor to instruct them; and were it not for the only wise God, they would be as unwise as the wild ass's colt, as foolish as idiots, Ps. xciv. 10. But God is above all teachers, all tutors, Job xxi. 22, 'Shall any teach God knowledge?' Some persons are incapable of teaching because of their extreme weakness; *Ex quovis ligno non fit Mercurius*, their parts are so very low and mean, that they cannot be taught. But God is incapable of teach-

ing, because of his immense wisdom; his abilities are so high that they are above and beyond all instruction: Isa. xl. 13, 14, 'Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him?' The wise Solomon had his privy counsellors, the wisest princes and states have their council-tables, and there is reason enough for it, because two heads are better than one, as we say, and two eyes see more than one: 'Two are better than one,' Eccles. iv. 9; and in many counsellors there is safety. But God, who is all head, all eye, all understanding, needs none to advise or counsel him. Two candles indeed are better than one, because the light of each is little and small, and capable of increase, but one sun is better than a million of candles, because its light is, after a sort, boundless, and incapable of the least addition or increase by millions of candles. Ver. 14. 'With whom took he counsel?' with what angel, with what man, with what politician did he ever consult? Who instructed him in the paths of judgment? taught him what was just, what was unjust, what to do, what to forbear? how to govern and order the affairs of the world, in what manner and measure to cut out and carve every one's portion? Who taught him knowledge, and shewed him the way of understanding? Where is the creature that can say he obliged God by giving him directions in any case? Where is the man, the angel, that can speak it, that he ever taught God one lesson, or told him one letter? If any such be, God will pay him well for his learning: Rom. xi. 34, 35, 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Who hath given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?' We may know the mind of God for our instruction, but we can never know the mind of God for his instruction, 1 Cor. ii. 16.

(3.) God is incomparable in his power. Power is that ability or force by which we act. Power in God is that attribute by which he effecteth whatsoever he pleaseth. In this he hath no equal: 'Who is a strong God like unto thee?' Ps. lxxxix. 8. Where is the being that is like him in strength? God is not only strong, but mighty in strength, Job ix. 4; not only powerful, but excellent in power, Job xxxvii. 23. Job hath a notable expression: chap. ix. 19, 'If I speak of strength, lo he is strong'—*i.e.*, as it is ordinary with us, when we would lift a man up to the height of praise for any quality in him, to say, If you speak of wealth, there is a rich man; if you speak of learning, there is a scholar for you; so here saith Job, 'If I speak of strength, lo he is strong.' If I speak of strength and ability to contend and fight, lo, behold, wonder, here

is one that is strong indeed, that never contendeth but he prevaileth; who never combats but he conquers: he is strong indeed; he is strong to purpose, with effect. He can offend, and there is no standing before him: Dan. iv. 35, he doth whatsoever he will, and none can stay his hand. He can stop the motion of the strongest creature in its fullest, swiftest career, but none can stop or stay him in his actions. Many have presumption enough to oppose him, but none have power enough to overcome him. He can defend, and there is no striving with him: Isa. xliii. 2, 'When thou passest through the waters (be they never so boisterous, so tempestuous, so deep, so dangerous) I will be with thee, and they shall not overflow thee.' The floods of the ungodly may be very fierce and violent, but they shall never overflow, or overcome, those whom God is pleased to protect. It must be a strange and strong arrow that can pierce such a shield of defence, Gen. xv. 1.

David tells us, 'God hath spoken once, yea twice have I heard thee,' Ps. lxii. 11. It was some special extraordinary thing certainly that David ushers in with such a preface, that God spake so solemnly, and he heard so attentively. But what was it? 'That power belongeth to God' as his proper peculiar excellency, as his crown and sceptre.

God is not only mighty, but almighty; not only the mighty God, Isa. ix. 6, but the almighty God, 2 Cor. vi. 18. He is a God that never met with a difficulty, much less with an impossibility. Nothing is too hard for God, Gen. xviii. 14. All things are hard to men, and many things too hard for men or angels, but nothing is too hard for God: 'I know that thou canst do all things,' Job xlii. 2.

Men are strong: they may have a natural strength as men, a civil strength as magistrates; they may be too strong in themselves for other persons, and too strong in their armies and militias for other kingdoms and countries; but are they strong enough for God? Surely no: 1 Cor. i. 25, The weakness of God is stronger than man: *Ubi Deus virtutem suam occultando infirmiter agere videtur, robustior tamen illa quæ putatur imbecillitas, quavis hominum virtute.*—Calv. in Corinth. Not that there is any weakness in God—for should any think so, he ungods him—but in those actions wherein God is pleased to conceal his power, and seemeth to act infirmly; even that seeming infirmity excels all human power and strength. Hence it is that God throweth down the gauntlet to Job: Job xl. 9, 'Hast thou an arm like God?' By arm is meant power and strength, because the arm is that member of man by which he exerteth and exerciseth that power and strength which

he hath; so Job xxxv. 9; *i.e.*, Job, though thou hast had a strong natural arm, and a strong civil arm, as the greatest man in the east, and a king in the army, Job i. 3, xxix. 25, yet hast thou an arm like God? Canst thou make and unmake, kill and make alive, cast down and lift up at thy pleasure, as I do? Is thine arm as long to reach all thine enemies, and as strong to break and bruise them in pieces with a blow? Hast thou an arm like God? Canst thou brandish and wield a sword with thine arm to the terror and horror, to the confusion and destruction of all that oppose thee? 'God hath a mighty arm, strong is his hand, high is his right hand,' Ps. lxxxix. 13.

Angels are stronger than men. The evil angel is called the strong man, Luke xi. 21; they are styled principalities and powers, Eph. vi. 12; roaring lions, 1 Pet. v. 8; red dragons, Rev. xii. 9; which denote their power to be far superior to man's. The devil is the prince of the powers of the air, Eph. ii. 2; can command storms and tempests, and with a puff of his mouth blow down houses and cities. Good angels probably are stronger; one of them in a night destroyeth 184,000 men. They are so strong that they are said to excel in strength, Ps. ciii. 20. And indeed the spirituality and purity of their natures speaks their power. Man's weakness is partly from his flesh, which is a phrase whereby the prophet describes the impotency of the creature: 'They are men, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit,' Isa. xxxi. 3. And when the Holy Ghost would describe the strength of a thing, he opposeth it to flesh, 2 Cor. x. 4: 'Our weapons are not fleshly or carnal, but mighty,' partly from his moral filthiness, his sin, which, being a real disease, doth debilitate and weaken the powers of man. Hence, to be a sinner, and to be without strength, is all one, Rom. v. 6, 8, and holiness is called the strength of man, Rev. iii. 8. But angels are spirits, not flesh: 'He maketh his angels spirits,' Ps. civ. 4. And good angels are free from sin, therefore called holy angels, Mark viii. 38. Yet notwithstanding all their power as spirits, as sinless spirits, they are weakness to God. As it is said of leviathan, 'He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood,' Job xli. 27: so I may say of God; he esteemeth the strength of evil angels as straw, and of good angels as rotten wood. Evil angels are fettered, wherever they go, in the chains of his anger and his power, which they cannot break asunder, but must bear, as intolerable as they are. And good angels own and acknowledge his might and strength above all other, Rev. iv. 8, 11. The power of God hath no fellow, no parallel. There is no rock, *i.e.*, no strength, rocks being strong

natural fortifications; *vide* 1 Sam. xiv. 4; Judges vi. 16, like our God, 1 Sam. ii. 2.

(4.) God is incomparable in his justice. Justice in general is the giving every one their due. In God, it is that attribute whereby he disposeth all things according to the rule of equity, Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. xi. 5; and rendereth to every man according to his works, without respect of persons, Ps. lxii. 12; Job xxxiv. 11, 19; Gal. vi. 6, 7. God is positively or affirmatively just: Zeph. iii. 5, 'The just Lord is in the midst thereof, he will not do iniquity.' He is eminently the just one, Acts vii. 52; he is superlatively most just, Job xxxiv. 17. Wilt thou condemn him that is most just? altogether just; or, as some read it, justice justice, without the least mixture, tincture, or shadow of injustice; all over just and justice. He is most just, just in the highest degree, just beyond all degrees. He giveth to all their due, without fear of evil—he standeth in awe of none for their power or greatness; his day of vengeance is against the cedars of Lebanon, and the oaks of Bashan, and all the high mountains, Isa. ii. 13, 14—without hope of gain; men are unjust for bribes, Hosea iv. 14, and love with shame give ye; but riches prevail not in the day of his wrath, Prov. xi. 4; Ezek. vii. 19. He is no taker of gifts, 2 Chron. xix. 7, and without respect to any, for their nearness or relation to him, or honours, or outward excellencies, Jer. xxii. 24. He will pluck the signet from his right hand in the day of his justice. Israel were a people near to him, Deut. iv. 7; Ps. cxlviii. 14, yet he doth not spare them when they rebel against him, Ps. lxxiv. 1–3, xliv. 10–15; Jer. vii. 12. Read the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and you will find his severity to them, notwithstanding their near relation to him. Adam and angels were great and excellent beings, yet when they sinned, he made them to suffer: 'He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor,' Job xxxiv. 19. He acteth according to law most exactly, and according to a law published, and according to a most righteous and just law, Rom. ii. 12, 13, 15, 16, and vii. 12, therefore is most just: 'Surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment,' Job xxxiv. 12. Surely the Almighty cannot do wickedly, neither can God pervert judgment. Men *may* do justly, God *must* do justly; he cannot but do justly; and that because his will is his law, and the most exact platform and rule of all justice and righteousness. Whatsoever he doth is just, because he doth it who is the great sovereign and supreme of the world, Job xxxiv. 12, 13.

The actions of God are often mysterious, but ever righteous: Ps.

cxlv. 17, 'The Lord is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works.' When his paths are in the seas, and his goings in deep waters, Ps. lxxvii. 19, that none can fathom them, or find out the reason of them, even then all his ways are judgment, Deut. xxxii. 4. Not as judgment is opposed to mercy, but as judgment is opposed to injustice. 'When clouds and darkness are before him,' *i.e.*, when his providences are such hard texts that none can expound them, and such dark riddles that none can unfold them; even then, 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne,' Ps. xcix. 2. His disposing and distributive power moves always within the sphere of righteousness.

Men may be just, Mat. i. 19; Joseph was a just man; Noah, Gen. vi. 9; John, Mark vi. 20; Cornelius, Acts x. 22. 'But shall mortal man be more just than God? shall man be more pure than his Maker?' Job iv. 17. The expression is a denial of all comparison between God and man: it is the highest presumption for man to prefer himself before God, Isa. xiv. 13, 14. Yea, it is monstrous impudency for man to compare himself with God. We say amongst men that comparisons are odious; but this is the most odious comparison of all, for Enosh, a weak frail creature, to compare with Elchah, the mighty, almighty Creator; for crookedness to compare with straightness, and darkness to compare with light. The most just man compared with God is unjust; his righteousness is as a filthy rag: 'In his sight can no flesh be justified,' Ps. cxliii. 2. Though in the sight of men a man may be just, yet in the sight of God he is unjust. Compare a star with a candle, and it is somewhat; but compare it with the sun, and it is nothing—it must hide its head for shame. Compare a godly man with a wicked man, or one not so good as himself, and he is somebody; but compare him with an angel, he is nobody: what is he then, if he be compared with a God? Job ix. 2, 3: 'How should man be just with God?' Speak the way, declare the means, the manner, how man should be righteous before God, 'If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.' Not to one question of a thousand which God can put to him, not for one action of a thousand which himself hath wrought. Alas, is he just, who is so far from ability to justify all he doth, that he cannot justify one act of a thousand that he doth?

Angels are just, they are righteous in their natures, have no spot in their lives, have no error, Ps. ciii. 20. But are they righteous to God, or before God? No, Job iv. 16–18. Angels are nothing in justice to God; though they are just to man, they are unjust to God.

They are in a possibility, considered in themselves, of actual injustice, which God is not; he is incapable of being unjust. Again, the law or rule of angels' righteousness is without them, and distinct from them, and thereby they are the more capable of swerving from it; but the law or rule of God's justice is within him, yea, it is himself; he is his own law, his own rule, and therefore it is impossible for him to recede or err from it. When the workman and his rule are different, there may be fear of wandering from his rule; for though the rule be straight, yet the man may, through the mistake of his eye, or shaking of his hand, draw a crooked line; but when the workman and his rule are the same, there is no fear. God's will, that acteth all things, is the rule by which he acteth; and therefore every line must be straight, and every action just. He can never err in anything he doth, whose will is the rule of all he doth, nay, whose actions are their own rule. Such is the creature's weakness that he may wander out of his way; but such is the Creator's power and perfection that he cannot possibly wander, because he is his own way: Dan. iv. 35, 'I Nebuchadnezzar blessed the Most High, who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.' Observe, who doth according to his will, that is his essential eternal rule. God doth so much surpass men and angels in justice, that he is said to be the habitation of justice: Jer. l. 7, 'They have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice,' as if justice dwelt no where, had no abode, but in him and with him.

CHAPTER VIII.

God incomparable in his attributes, in his knowledge and faithfulness.

(5.) God is incomparable in his knowledge. Knowledge is that attribute of God, whereby he understandeth all things in and of himself. He is styled in the Scriptures, 1 Sam. ii. 3, a God of knowledge: 'The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.' As Christ is called a 'Man of sorrows,' Isa. liii. 3, to express the greatness of his griefs, to denote him one made up of sorrow, little else than sorrow; so God is called a God of knowledge, to express the greatness of his knowledge, as if he were wholly and only knowledge. Hence he hath eyes and ears attributed to him, because he knoweth all that is done as an eye-wit-

ness, and whatsoever is spoken as an ear-witness, 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. xi. 7.

The understanding of God is, like himself, infinite, without bounds or limits: Ps. cxlvii. 5, 'His understanding is infinite.' He is said, Job xxxvii. 16, to be perfect in knowledge, not only comparatively, as one man may be in respect of another, or as an angel may be in respect of man; but absolutely. To his knowledge nothing can be given or added, from his knowledge nothing can be taken. His knowledge is so perfect that it admits not of an increase or decrease. Men are knowing: Solomon was famous for knowledge, 1 Chron. i. 12; he could speak of the nature of all plants, from the cedar to the hyssop, 1 Kings iv. 33. The Romans are said to be filled with all knowledge, Rom. xv. 14. Angels are more knowing than men; flesh is dull-sighted, and of dim understanding; spirits have sharper wits, and quicker apprehensions. The devil, though a fallen angel, hath one of his names Dæmon, from his knowledge. Elect angels surely know much more than devils, for they always behold the face of their Father; and in that face, as in a glass, behold more than human eyes can discern, or evil angels conceive. The spirits of just men in heaven see face to face, and know as they are known, understand very much more than they could here below; but angels, as their understandings are of larger capacity, and their natures more excellent, must needs know more than men. But do men or angels know as God? can it be said of any man, of any angel, he is perfect in knowledge? his knowledge is incapable of addition or diminution? Can it be said of any man, any angel, his knowledge is infinite? Man's knowledge in this world is little in comparison of what it shall be, yea, nothing. 'We are but of yesterday, and know nothing,' Job viii. 3. He is but of small continuance here, and hath but little experience, and therefore must have but little knowledge, yea, so little that it is called nothing; yea, the knowledge of men and angels in the other world will be so little, though enough for their perfection and satisfaction, that it will be nothing in comparison of the knowledge of God; finite knowledge is nothing compared with that knowledge which is infinite.

Whether you consider the matter or object of God's knowledge, or the manner or way of it, he is incomparable in it.

1. If you consider the matter or object of his knowledge: God knoweth all things: John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things:' 1 John iii. 20, 'God is greater than our hearts, for he knoweth all things.' He knoweth whatsoever hath been, whatsoever is, what-

soever shall be, whatsoever can be, whatsoever cannot be. He knoweth all substances, accidents, necessary, contingent things. He makes all, upholds all, governs all, and discerneth all. 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place,' 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

He knoweth those things that are most hidden, most secret, the hearts, the thoughts, the most close retired motions of the spirit of man: 1 Cor. ii. 11, 'What man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him?' Yea, what angel knoweth the things of a man? But God doth: 'Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more the hearts of the children of men?' Prov. xv. 11. Hell seems to be far from his sight, and very remote from heaven his seat. The hearts of the children of men seem to be unsearchable, so deep that none can fathom them; but he hath a line that will sound these depths. He knoweth the spirit of man better than man knoweth himself: 'The heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked: who knoweth it? (No man, no angel knoweth it.) 'I the Lord search the heart,' Jer. xvii. 9, 10. And none knoweth it but he, therefore he is incomparable herein: 'For thou, thou only, knowest the hearts of the children of men,' 1 Kings viii. 39. It is his sole prerogative. Men and angels may see the skins and colours, and lineaments and proportions, and faces and garments, or outsides of things; but God seeth the insides, he pryeth into the very bowels of things, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. All things are naked and dissected and anatomised before him, Heb. iv. 13; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Ps. vii. 10; Jer. xi. 20.

He knoweth what is future, as well as what is past and present: 'Thou knowest my thoughts afar off,' Ps. cxxxix. 2. Long before I think them; they are in thy thoughts, before they are in my heart. Man knoweth not what a day is big with, or may bring forth, Prov. xxvii. 1, nor angels neither; but God knoweth what is in the womb of eternity, what all ages and generations shall produce: 'He declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient time the things that are not yet done,' Isa. xlvi. 10. And tells us this is proper to himself: 'Let them declare the things that shall come to pass, that we may know that they are gods,' Isa. xli. 23. Let them foretell what is future, and we will believe their deity. Predictions are *arcana imperii*, those secret things that belong only to God, Deut. xxix. 29; Isa. xli. 22, 23, 26.

2. He is incomparable in the manner of his knowledge. God knoweth all things fully and perfectly; men and angels know, what they do know, but imperfectly and by halves. They know but part of what is knowable, and they know this but in part. God beholds

everything thoroughly, as if, like a well-drawn picture, he beheld that alone, and none but that, 2 Chron. xvi. 9; his eyelids try the children of men, Ps. xi. 5, *i.e.*, he hath a distinct, certain, critical, thorough knowledge of them.

God knoweth all things immediately, by immediate intuition, not by species. Men know things either by the senses, the eyes, ears, or tastes; or by species taken in by the sense, and imprinted on the fantasy, which are thence offered to the understanding; or else by faith, and the report of others, or by discourse and ratiocination. He knoweth one thing by another, the conclusion by mediums and premises; the causes by the effects, and the consequents by the antecedents. Saints and angels in heaven know things in God, not in themselves. God knoweth all things in themselves, and seeth all things in himself, as in a glass. Man in this world must have a twofold light to see by; a light in his eye, and a light in the air. But the Father of lights needs no light to see by: 'Darkness and light are both alike to him,' Ps. cxxxix. 12; his eyes are as a flame of fire, he seeth in the dark, Rev. i. 14.

God knoweth all things at once, *uno actu et uno ictu*, as they say. Creatures know one thing by another, and one thing after another; their understandings are unable to take in many objects at once, much less able to take in all objects at once; but God seeth all things at one view: 'The Lord looketh down from heaven; he beholdeth all the children of men. From the place of his habitation he beholdeth all the inhabitants of the earth,' Ps. xxxiii. 13, 14. The eye of man may see many things at once, as a hive of bees, but if it will see other things, it must remove the sight; though the mind of man can take in more than the eye, as a whole country or world at once, yet it is only the lump or gross. If it would take the distinct knowledge of them, it must remove from thought to thought; but God takes all distinctly, particularly, at once.

God knoweth all things from everlasting, before ever the world had a being. Men and angels may know what is, when it is, but cannot know it as God doth, before it was: Acts xv. 18, 'Known to God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.' Before he erected the curious frame of the world, he knew all the rooms and furniture in it, all the motions and actions of all the inhabitants of it. He doth by one pure, simple, undivided, eternal act of his understanding, know all things perfectly, immediately, distinctly, every moment.

(6.) God is incomparable in his truth and faithfulness. Truth is that attribute in God whereby he is in himself, as he reveals

himself to be, and in his sayings and doings, as he speaketh and acteth.

God is truth in himself, and truth towards his creatures. He is truth in himself:—1. As he truly is, and really existeth. Hence he is styled the true God, Jer. x. 10; John xvii. 3, in opposition to idols, or false gods, 1 Thes. i. 9. So he is truly infinite, truly all-sufficient, truly eternal, truly immutable, &c. 2. As he is the unchangeable archetype and idea of all true things without himself, so all created things are true, as they answer their patterns in his mind. 3. In his immanent actions, as his decrees and eternal resolutions are all certain, and attain a punctual accomplishment, Ps. xxxiii. 11. He is never deceived nor disappointed in his purposes.

God is truth towards his creatures: 1. In his works, as all his actions of creation, preservation, government, redemption, are real; and not chimeras or appearances, Rev. xv. 3; Ps. cxi. 7; Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. xxv. 10.

2. In his words: all he saith is truth; his precepts are true, a perfect rule of holiness, without any defect: Ps. cxix. 86, 'All thy commandments are faithfulness;' ver. 142, 'Thy law is the truth.' All his promises are true, and shall be performed: 'Not one good thing faileth of all that the Lord our God hath promised,' Josh. xxiii. 14. Hence the gospel, the compendium of all the promises, is often called the word of truth, James i. 18. And the covenant of grace is called sure mercies, Isa. lv. 3. All his predictions are true, and come to pass in their season, Hab. ii. 3; Rev. xxii. 6, 7. 'These are true and faithful sayings,' Gen. xlix. 10.

His threatenings are true, and fail not of their accomplishment, 2 Kings ix. 26, 36; Rom. ii. 2.

He is truth itself, John xiv. 6, and xvii. 6; abundant in truth, Exod. xxxiv. 6; truth, truth; the Lord God of truth, Ps. xxxi. 5; a God that cannot lie, Titus i. 2. All lying ariseth either from forgetfulness; men break their word, because their memories are slippery; but *oblivio non cadit in Deum*, he is ever mindful of his word, Luke i. 72. To remember his holy covenant, Ps. cvi. 46, and cxi. 5, He will ever be mindful of his covenant. Or from weakness, some would, but want power to make good their promises; though they were able when they promised, yet they are by some providence or other disabled, before the day of performance comes; but the strength of Israel cannot lie, 1 Sam. xv. 29. The rock, the eternity of Israel cannot lie. Or from wickedness, some can but will not make good their words; but God cannot be

charged with any wickedness: Ps. xcii. 15,' There is no unrighteousness in him;' 1 Kings xxii. 23; Ezek. xiv. 9.

Men may be true, Ps. xv. 4; angels are true; but neither men nor angels are true as God is, let them be put in the scales with God; 'And men of high degree are vanity, and angels of the highest degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity,' Ps. lxii. 9. Read over God's truth in himself, and you will see how far angels come short thereof. Are they the exemplar of all things? are all things true as they agree with the ideas in their minds? Consider his truth towards his creatures. Can it be said of an angel as of God, 'The angel that cannot lie hath promised'? Titus i. 2. Are they under an absolute impossibility of deceiving? Surely if they be considered in themselves, it was as possible for them to lie as for the father of lies. It is said of God, 'It is impossible for him to lie,' Heb. vi. 18. But this cannot be spoken of elect angels considered in themselves. God is so true that he only is true, all to him are liars, Rom. iii. 4; Rev. iii. 7, 14.

CHAPTER IX.

God incomparable in his mercy and patience.

(7.) God is incomparable in his mercy. Mercy is an attribute of God, whereby he pitieth and relieveth his creature in misery. It is an attribute which relateth to the creature only; God knoweth himself, and loveth himself, and glorifieth himself; but he is not merciful to himself. It is an attribute that relateth to the creature in misery. Justice seeks a worthy object, grace is exercised towards an unworthy object, but mercy looks out for a needy, an indigent object. God is bountiful and gracious to elect angels, because they could not deserve that perfection and happiness which they enjoy; but he is not merciful to them, for they were never miserable. Fallen man is the proper object of mercy, as being not only undeserving of the least good, but as also having plunged himself into all evil. Mercy is an attribute, whereby he pitieth his creature in misery; hence he is said in Scripture, after the manner of men, to have tender mercies, Ps. xxv. 6; and bowels of mercy, Luke i. 58; and to be afflicted in the afflictions of his people, Isa. lxiii. 9; and to have his soul grieved for the miseries of Israel, Judges x. 15, 16. As tender parents are extremely troubled for the afflictions of their children, Ps. ciii. 12, 13, so his bowels are turned within him, his

repentings are kindled together, Hosea xi. 8, 9. Mercy doth not only pity, but also relieve the afflicted; it hath a hand to supply, as well as a heart to pity those that are in distress, Isa. xxxiv. 18; Gen. xix. 16.

The attribute of mercy is that which God glorieth in, and boasteth of, Exod. xxxiii. 19; Ps. ciii. 8. Noble and heroic spirits are ever gentle and merciful; the basest minds are most cruel, and farthest from mercy. God saith, 'Fury is not in him,' Isa xxvii. 4; 'judgment is his strange work,' Isa. xxviii. 21; 'He doth not afflict willingly,' Lam. iii. 33; but 'delighteth in the prosperity of his servants,' Ps. xxxv. 27. It is not his nature to disturb and destroy men, it is their sin that forceth thunderbolts into his hands, Isa. xliv. 22; his delight is in mercy, Micah vii. 18. The blessed God hath multitude of mercies, Ps. li. 1, to answer the multitude of the creature's miseries, abundant mercy, 1 Pet. i. 3. He is said to be rich in mercy, Eph. ii. 4. 'Exceeding abundant rich in mercy,' Eph. ii. 7. His mercy, as oil, swims on the top of all his attributes, is his delight: Jer. xxxii. 41, 'I will rejoice over them, to do them good.' His mercy, as gold, being most excellent, overlayeth all his works: Ps. cxlv. 7, 'His tender mercy is over all his works.' His mercy is to all admiration: 'Oh how excellent is thy loving-kindness,' Ps. xxxvi. 7. 'Oh how great is thy goodness,' Ps. xxxi. 19. His mercy is beyond all apprehension; 'Thy mercy reacheth to the heavens,' Ps. cviii. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 9. He is styled the Father of mercies, 1 Cor. i. 3; not the Father of justice or fury.

Mercy is the joy and pleasure of God; hence he is said to have a mercy-seat, and to have a throne of grace, Heb. ix. 5. Sitting is a posture of ease and rest, but he riseth to execute justice, Ps. lxviii. 1. He doth rest in his love, Zeph. iii. 17. Mercy is the glory and honour of God. When Moses desired to see the glory of God, Exod. xxxiii. 18, the Lord proclaims, 'The Lord God gracious, merciful,' Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. When God promiseth to do great things for his people, that he will give them health, abundance of peace, cleanse them from all their filthiness, and pardon all their iniquities, Jer. xxxiii. 7–9; he gives us the fruit of it: ver. 9, 'And it shall be to me for a name of joy, a praise and glory before all nations.' His mercy is his riches, his treasure; hence he is said to be rich in mercy, Eph. ii. 4.

God is merciful in all he doth, universally merciful: 'All his ways are mercy and truth,' Ps. xxv. 10. The whole world is a volume written within and without with characters of mercy. He is merciful to all men, Ps. cxlv. 9; Sheweth mercy to thousands, Exod.

xx. 6, and xxxiv. 7; Mat. v. 45, 46. He is merciful at all times; 'His mercy endureth for ever,' Ps. cxviii. 1, and cxxxvi. 1–3. He is merciful in all respects; he giveth all sorts of mercies, 1 Tim. vi. 13; Eph. i. 3; 2 Pet. i. 3, 4.

Men are merciful, Prov. xi. 17; Ps. xxxvii. 26; so are angels in a sense; but none of them comparable to God. The tender mercies of the wicked, yea, of the righteous men, yea, of angels, are cruelties to the mercies of God. Have they such pity, such bowels for miserable creatures, as God hath? Have they such power, such ability, to relieve afflicted ones, as God hath? Can they afford preserving, protecting mercy as God, Job x. 12; pardoning and forgiving mercy, Micah vii. 18; purifying and renewing mercy, Eph. ii. 4; saving and eternal mercy? Titus iii. 5, 6. Oh how infinitely short do they come of him! He is so incomparable in mercy, that mercy is said to belong only to him: 'Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy,' Ps. lxii. 10; unto thee, and none but thee. He is so merciful, that when his bowels conflict with justice on the behalf of sinners, and get the upper hand, he rejoiceth in the victory; 'Mercy rejoiceth against judgment,' James ii. 14. He is so merciful, that he dispenseth with his own institutions for the sake of it, Hosea vi. 6; Mat. ix. 13, with xii. 7. Once more, he is so merciful, that he is upbraided with it, as if he were too fond of that attribute, and loved it overmuch: Jonah iv. 2, 'Was not this my saying in my own country? for I knew that thou wast merciful.' Thou didst send me to preach destruction and desolation to Nineveh, but when I received the message, I knew all would be prevented by mercy, and that to preach such a threatening was but to disgrace and dishonour myself, as a false prophet, before the men of Nineveh; for I thought then what is now come to pass, that, notwithstanding the peremptoriness of the message, mercy would interpose, and prove me false.

(8.) God is incomparable in his patience. Patience is that attribute in God whereby he beareth with sinners, and forbears or defers their punishment, or that whereby he expecteth and waiteth long for their conversion. He is a God slow to anger, Ps. ciii. 8. He waiteth on men to do them good, Isa. xxx. 18. He is long-suffering, 2 Pet. iii. 7, 9. Nay, he endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, Rom. ix. 22. He is the God of patience, Rom. xv. 5.

The patience of God is the more admirable if we consider—

1. How perfectly he hateth sin, Ps. v. 4; Hab. i. 13; Prov. vi. 16. And how offensive it is to him, it grieveth him, Eph. iv. 30.

It presseth him as sheaves press a cart, Amos ii. 13. He is broken with their whorish hearts, Ezek. vi. 9. Though he be so infinitely perfect that no sin can be hurtful to him, yet he is so infinitely pure that all sin is hateful to him.

2. What an affront sin is to him, a contempt of his authority, therefore called a despising him, 1 Sam. ii. 30. An eclipsing his honour, therefore called a dishonouring him, Rom. ii. 23. A contention with him for mastery, therefore called a fighting against him, Acts v. 39; Job xv. 25. A violation of his commands, therefore called a transgression of the law, 1 John iii. 4. It affronts his wisdom, therefore called folly, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10; his justice, therefore called unrighteousness, 1 John i. 6, 7; his patience, therefore called a despising his long-suffering, Rom. ii. 4; his mercy, therefore called a turning his grace into wantonness, Jude 4; his truth, therefore called a lie, Isa. xliv. 20. It must be infinite patience to bear with that which is the object of infinite hatred.

3. Who they are who thus dare and provoke him? They are his creatures, Ps. c. 2, whom he hath infinitely obliged, Lam. iii. 22, 23; and laden with innumerable blessings, Ps. cxvi. 12; and loved inconceivably, John iii. 16; and seeks daily to overcome with his kindness, Ps. cxxx. 5; Hosea xi. 1. Yet these turn rebels and traitors, devise and endeavour his ruin, and join with Satan, his arch-enemy, in order thereunto, Eph. ii. 2, 3; Job xv. 25, 26.

4. That he knoweth all men's sins, the number of them, the nature of them, all the aggravations they admit of. He knoweth their thoughts, words, actions, Ps. cxxxix. 'I know all their wickedness and all their sins,' Amos v. 12; Ezek. xi. 5.

5. That he hath power in his hands to avenge himself when he pleaseth. He can look, speak, think his creature into hell-fire. Here is the miracle: 'He that is great in power is slow to anger,' Nah. i. 3.

6. That he is the more provoked because of his patience. The revenues of heaven are at present impaired by it. Good men hereby question and quarrel with his providence, Ps. lxxiii. 2–4; Jer. xii. 1–3. Bad men hereby are encouraged to continue in sin, and to judge him an abettor of their profanenesss, Eccles. viii. 11; Ps. l. 21.

7. That he beareth, notwithstanding all this, year after year, many years; forty years with the Jews, Ps. xcv. 10; with the whole world one hundred and twenty years, Gen. vi. 3; with the Amorites four hundred years, Gen. xv. 13, 14.

8. That he doth not only forbear them, but also do them good.

He continueth life, and health, and food, and raiment, and friends, and relations; nay, the gospel and salvation, and seasons of grace, and tenders of his love and favour, and of everlasting life, Acts xvii. 17, 18, 27, 28; Luke xix. 41; Job xxi. 14–16; 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

Men are patient. Moses was the meekest man on earth, Num. xii. 12; but could he bear as God? No. When the Israelites provoked him, he was impatient: Ps. cvi. 33, 'They provoked his spirit, that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.' The apostles were good men; yet, upon a little affront, they call for fire from heaven, Luke ix. 54. If God should be as impatient towards the most patient men as they are towards others, woe would be to them that ever they were born.

But though men come short, yet are not angels as patient as God? Surely no. Angels cannot bear like God with such a froward, peevish piece as man is. The Lord told Moses that 'he would not go up in the midst of them, lest he should consume them for their sins; but he would send an angel before them, to drive out the Canaanites,' Exod. xxxiii. 2. Yet, ver. 4, 'When the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned; and no man did put on his ornaments.' What evil tidings? 1. They should have an angel for their guide and guard, that was both stronger and wiser than any man. 2. An angel that 'should drive out their enemies,' (God undertaketh for that,) and bring them into the best country under heaven. 3. God gives them the reason why he declines their immediate conduct, lest their stubbornness should provoke him to destroy them; yet they weep and mourn at these tidings. Alas! they knew if God could not bear with their provocations, much less could angels; and therefore, if angels be their guides, they must perish. If they could tire out infinite forbearance, and drain an ocean, they must needs quickly tire out finite patience, and drain a little stream. How soon would limited forbearance and a drop of patience be spent! God is so incomparable in his patience that he is called 'the God of all patience;' not only because he hath all manner of patience in him, but because he hath engrossed it all to himself.

CHAPTER X.

God incomparable in his attributes, as they are from him, as they are his essence, as they are all one in him, as they are in him in an infinite manner.

2. I shall shew more specially the difference between God and his creatures in reference to these communicable attributes.

1. These attributes are all essential to God. They are from God, as well as in God. He is their author as well as their subject. But in men and angels they are all derivative: though truth and justice and holiness may be in them, yet they are not from them, but from God. God is not obliged to any but himself for them, he can thank only himself that he hath them; but angels and men are not obliged to themselves, but to him for them. When the high God would lay Job low, by manifesting the vast difference between himself and Job, he bids Job be obliged to himself for his excellency: Job xl. 10, 'Deck thyself with majesty and excellency; array thyself with glory and beauty.' To be decked and arrayed with majesty and excellency, notes, 1. The extent and abundance of it—the whole man is covered with raiment. To be clothed with shame, is to be extremely reproached, Ps. xxxv. 26. To be arrayed with humility, is to be very humble, lowly in an extraordinary degree, 1 Pet. v. 5. 2. The publicness of it. Our deckings and raiments are visible; we cannot go abroad but all see our clothes. God speaks to Job to this purpose: Job, thou hast talked very presumptuously, and carried thyself as if there were no great distance or difference between me and thyself, as if thou wert like me, and equal to me. If thou art, let me see it; deck thyself with majesty and excellency, array thyself with glory and beauty. I can deck myself, and array myself with all these in the highest degree, and will not be beholden to any others for their help; I am clothed with majesty, but no creature lent a hand for the making up or putting on those clothes; Ps. civ. 1. 'I have covered myself with light as with a garment,' Ps. civ. 2. But neither man nor angel afforded me the least assistance therein. Do thou as much for thyself as I have done for myself, and then indeed thou mayest compare with me. God might make the same offer to angels which he doth to Job, and none of them would or could accept it. Dependence is of their essence, as they are creatures; and they can no more be separated from it than from themselves.

2. These attributes are the very essence of God, not qualities or properties, as in men and angels. The holiness of God is the holy God; 'Once have I sworn by my holiness,' Ps. lxxxix. 36; *i.e.*, by myself, 'that I will not lie unto David;' for Heb. vi. 13, 'God having no greater to swear by, swore by himself.' The power of God is the powerful God, the truth of God is the true God, the wisdom of God is the wise God. All his attributes are himself, his essence; in men and angels, their wisdom, and power, and justice, and truth, are accidents, and differ from their substances; and this is apparent, because angels and men may be, and are, without these attributes, as devils and wicked men. In them these properties are one thing and their essence is another thing, so that they may be separated. An angel may be an angel, and not holy, nor wise, nor just, &c. A man may be a man, and not powerful, nor patient, nor merciful; and the reason is, because these properties are really distinct from the essences of men or angels; but in God they are his very being and essence; they are himself, and can no way be separated from him, no more than he can be separated from himself: God could not be God if he were not most wise, most holy, most just, most patient, &c. God's attributes are one most pure essence diversely apprehended of us, as it is diversely manifested to us. God's punishing the wicked is his justice; God's performing his promises is his faithfulness; his relieving the miserable is his mercy; his bearing with the guilty is his patience; so are all his essence, himself.

3. Those attributes are all one in God. His justice is his mercy, and his wisdom is his patience, and his knowledge is his faithfulness, and his mercy is his justice, &c. Though they are distinguished in regard of their objects, and in regard of our apprehensions of them, and in regard of their effects, yet they are all one in themselves; and this floweth from the former head, because they are the essence of God, and his essence is a pure undivided being. In men and angels, these attributes or perfections are different and several, for they may have one without the other. Their righteousness is one thing, and their power another thing, and their truth a third thing; for we see in angels some that are strong and powerful that are not righteous or faithful, and among men some have one of these perfections who have not another; yea, though in good men all these perfections are in some degree, yet all are not in any one in the same degree. There is scarce any saint who is not more eminent for some spiritual excellency than for others; but in God they are all one and the same; as when the sunbeams shine

through a yellow glass they are yellow, a green glass they are green, a red glass they are red, and yet all the while the beams are the same; or as, when the sun shines on clay it hardens it, on wax it softens it, on sweet flowers it draweth out their fragrancy, on dung-hills and ditches it draweth out their ill savours, yet still it is the same sun and the same influences; the difference lieth in the objects and the effects. So the great God, who is always working in the world, when he worketh towards the wicked in punishing he is righteous, towards the godly in saving them he is merciful; yet still the same immutable God.

4. All these attributes are in God in the highest degree, yea, beyond all degrees. These communicable attributes which are in angels and men in degrees, and limited, for a finite substance will not admit of an infinite property, are in God infinitely. Immensity, like a golden thread, runs through all his communicable properties: his understanding is infinite, Ps. cxlvii. 5. So his justice is infinite, his mercy is infinite, and all the rest. They have no bounds, no limits, but his own will and pleasure. He never acted to the utmost in any of them; he never put forth so much power, but he could put forth more if he pleased; he never exercised so much patience, but he could exercise more if he would.

Hence it is that in Scripture they are affirmed of God not only in the concrete, but also in the abstract. He is not only loving, but love: 'God is love,' 1 John iv. 7. He is not only wise, but wisdom: Prov. ix. 1, 'Wisdom hath built her house.' He is not only good, but goodness: 'I will make all my goodness,' *i.e.*, myself, 'pass before thee,' Exod. xxxiii. 19. He is not only holy, but holiness: 'Look down from heaven, the habitation where thy holiness dwelleth,' Isa. lxiii. 15. Therefore these attributes of God must be boundless, because they are his being, himself.

CHAPTER XI.

God incomparable in his works, creation, and providence.

Thirdly, God is incomparable in his works, as well as in his being and attributes: none hath such a strong hand, such a stretched out arm, or can do like him. 'O Lord,' saith Moses, 'thou hast begun to shew to thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or on earth, that can do according to thy works?' Deut. iii. 24. He is a God doing wonders,

Exod. xv. 11. His doings are like his being: he works like a God: Isa. xxviii. 29, 'He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.' His works are all wonderful: Ps. lxxxvi. 10, 'Thou dost marvellous things, thou art God alone.' He doth *miranda stupenda;* so that it is said of him, Num. xxiii. 23, 'What hath God wrought?' His works are great, Joel ii. 21; 'honourable and glorious,' Ps. cxi. 3; 'perfect,' Deut. xxxii. 4. 'God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend,' Job xxxvii. 5. The works of men and angels are little, small; some mean things they do by divine concurrence; but his works are great and unsearchable, which we cannot comprehend. If creatures do great things, in a sense, or comparatively, yet they may be found out; their fellow-creatures have a clue which will lead them into all their labyrinths, and a line which will sound the bottom of all their actions; but God's works cannot be comprehended by the understandings of any creature: 'O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his ways, and doings past finding out,' Rom. xi. 33; 'His footsteps are not known,' Ps. lxxvii. 19; yea, 'He doth great things, and unsearchable, and marvellous things without number,' Job v. 9, till there be no number. If creatures do great things, and marvellous and unsearchable; yet you might soon reckon up all such works of theirs, one great, marvellous, unsearchable thing were enough for the whole creation; but God doth great things and unsearchable, yea, marvellous things without number. His ways are not as man's ways: 'As far as the heavens are higher than the earth, so far are his ways above the ways of man,' Isa. lv. 8, 9. No ways like his; among all the gods, there is none like unto him; neither are there any works like unto his works, Ps. lxxxvi. 8. Whether you consider the matter of his works, and the works themselves, or his manner of working.

1. His works themselves, and therein I shall pass by his internal works, both personal and effectual, and mention only his external works.

He is incomparable in what works he is pleased to do, or hath done.

(1.) Creation, herein he is incomparable: *creatura non potest creare,* the creature cannot create; *ex nihilo nihil fit* with them: man may do something towards the emendation of the form, but he cannot produce matter, no, nor mend it when it is before him. A goldsmith may make a sparkling jewel, but then you must give him gold and precious stones to make it of; he can put the matter

into a better form, but he is so far from making matter where there is none, that he cannot mend the matter which you give him: he cannot make gold of silver, nor diamonds of common stones. Man's work may exceed the matter, but man's work cannot make the matter exceed itself. But God can not only make the matter to exceed itself,—as in man, who is formed of the dust of the earth, he hath such curious parts, veins, sinews, arteries, &c.; such members, eyes, cheeks, ears, &c.; such characters of beauty on the whole, that he looks nothing like his parent earth, the matter of which he was made,—but also make matter: he hath brought something, nay, all things out of nothing. All the angels and men cannot create one grain of corn, one pile of grass, one mote of dust; but the great God hath erected the stately fabric of heaven and the earth, with the curious steps and stories thereof, and the various creatures and furniture therein, of nothing. Hereby he proves himself the true God, 'The living God that made heaven and earth, and all things therein,' Acts xiv. 15. He proves his deity hereby, Jer. x. 10–12, 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion;' *i.e.* can you be so foolish and sottish, as to imagine that blind, dumb, deaf, dead idols can compare with him who created you and all things beside? When God would proclaim his sovereignty and incomparable excellency, he challengeth Job, 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, or stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof set? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?' Job xxxviii. 4, 5. God would here denote the exactness and accurateness of his works, and so he alludes to men, who, when they would set up a strong, stately, neat, compact dwelling, lay the foundations and corner-stones, and all the rest, by line and measure. But that which God would principally intimate here, is his own omnipotency, and man's impotency: 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?' &c. Didst thou then lend me a helping head how to do it, or a helping hand in the doing of it? Surely no, I did all myself. Those innumerable beings which are on earth, and in the ocean, yea, that are included within the vast circumference of the highest heavens, are all made by him out of nothing: 'Through faith we believe that the worlds were made by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear,'

Heb. xi. 3. The great God had no materials to make the great house with, he did not frame it of his own essence, or any pre-existent matter, Isa. xlv. 12. Yet such admirable qualities are everywhere intermixed, matter and form, subject and accidents, power and goodness, wisdom and order; a rare symmetry, exact proportion, and beauty on the whole; a dependent subordination, and useful subserviency in every part, so equally poised, that it is hard to determine which bears the greatest weight in the mighty work, and gives abundant cause to cry out with the psalmist, 'O Lord, how marvellous are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all,' Ps. civ. 24.

(2.) He is incomparable in regard of providence: 1. For preservation none is like him, nay, none beside him doth this; 'O thou preserver of men;' Job vii. 20; 'thy visitation preserveth my spirit,' Job x. 12. God is unlike to men; the carpenters or masons build houses, and then leave them to the care and charge of others; but God keeps up what he sets up. His providence succeedeth creation, and is indeed a continual creation: 'Thou preservest man and beast,' Ps. xxxvi. 6. Not food, or air, or sleep, but 'thou preservest man and beast:' and not only men and beasts, but 'all things subsist by him,' Col. i. 17. That hand alone which made all, can maintain all; and that power only which produced out of nothing, must preserve from nothing, Acts xvii. 28. 'In him we live, and move, and have our beings.' That being which gave us our beings, must uphold us in our beings: Heb. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' 1. *Sustinendo*, as a pillar, or sure foundation, upon which they stand. The air which surrounds the earth and ocean, cannot bear a feather, yet in it hangeth the massy weight of earth and sea: Job xxvi. 7, 'He hangeth the earth'—*i.e.*, earth and sea, the terrestrial globe—'upon nothing:' his power is the only pillar that bears them up. 2. *Influendo*, as a fountain from which they derive all their virtue and operations: the beings and motions of all his creatures depend wholly upon his concurrence. If he suspend his influence, *coactum secundum*, according to the schoolmen, the fire will not burn, Dan. iii. 27. Neither can the best eyes see, though the faculty be well-disposed, and the object be coloured, and at a good distance, Gen. xix. 7, as hath been hinted before. It is natural to the sun to run his race strongly and swiftly, yet if he doth not concur, as swift as the sun is, he cannot creep a snail's pace; he standeth still in Gibeah, Josh. x. 13; Job ix. 7. 3. *Constringendo*, as a sovereign bond and ligature, by which the parts of all things hold together, and are kept as water

in a vessel, from flowing abroad to their dissolution. No man, no angel, can bear its own weight, much less the weight of another creature: every creature is like a glass without a bottom, which cannot stand alone, but must always be in hand.

It is impossible for the creation, or any part of it, to bear up a moment, if God should forget it, and deny his actual concurrence to it. It doth constantly depend on God, as the figure of the seal imprinted on the water, which being withdrawn, the impression is instantly defaced. God is to the world as the soul to the body, which alone can actuate and move it, without which it cannot stir at all, but is as a dead corpse.

2. For *gubernation;* he governeth all, and neither men nor angels can govern themselves. The great family of the world would soon lose its beauty, yea, its being, if he did not maintain its harmony and concord, by guiding them in their motions, keeping them in their several stations, and directing them to their ends: 'The Lord hath established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all,' Ps. ciii. 19. One creature would most cruelly devour another; beasts would prey on men: all creatures would become their own enemies and executioners; the whole earth would be turned into an Aceldama, and a Golgotha, a field of blood, and place of skulls, yea, into a hell, if he did not order, and guide, and govern all. Treasons, incest, slaughters, parricides, would overwhelm the whole world, pervert the order of nature, turn all into confusion and destruction, if he did not keep the reins in his own hands, and govern all things, in every of their actions, every moment.

He governeth the highest, even the governors themselves on earth, that seem to be above all government: kings and princes seem to be absolute, and wholly at their own disposal; 'Who may say to a king, What dost thou?' Many will tell us that their hands are their own, to do what they please; but more will acknowledge that their hearts are their own, to think as they please. But, alas, they cannot command their hands to do what they will, their hands are ruled and overruled by him, Acts iv. 28. 'Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together, to do what thy hand determined to be done.' In like manner, their hearts are not in their own hands, to think as they will, but in God's hand, to think what he will: 'The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth it as the rivers of water, which way he pleaseth,' Prov. xxi. 1. As the husbandman turneth the sluices into his ground, this way or that way, into this channel or that channel, as he thinks best for his own advantage; so God turneth the hearts of kings this way or

that way, which way he seeth most for his glory: Prov. xvi. 9, 'A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.' No man is master of himself, so much as of his thoughts; that heart that deviseth its way, is directed in those devices by God. The sun is higher than an earthly prince, and seems to be his own guide; he acteth naturally, and so necessarily: 'But if he speak to the sun, it riseth not, and he sealeth up the stars,' Job ix. 9. He hath a negative voice upon the motions of all beings.

He governeth the lowest as well as the highest: as none are so high as to be above his precepts, so none are so low as to be below his providence: the highest must remember him, and he doth not forget the lowest: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's providence,' Mat. x. 29. Sparrows seem to fly at liberty, and to fall casually; but even their flight is directed by God, and their fall ordered by him: they neither fly nor fall accidentally, but providentially.

He governeth the most stubborn creatures, those which seem wholly ungovernable. The winds, the high winds, whirlwinds, seem to cast off and scorn all rule and government, but these winds are at his will: 'stormy winds fulfil his word,' Ps. cxlviii. 8. When they rush forth with such irresistible force that neither men, nor trees, nor horses can stand before them, he rideth on their wings, and hath them more at command than a skilful rider hath a horse, to turn this way or that way at his pleasure, Ps. civ. 3, and xviii. 10. They are all at his beck: he causeth them to blow, Ps. cxlvii. 18, and ceaseth them, Mat. viii. 26. The wise man tells us he hath them in his fist, Prov. xxx. 4. He can hold them fast, or let them loose, as a man what he hath in his fist.

The waves seem rougher than the winds; the waters are moist bodies, that are with much difficulty contained in their own bounds, especially when the winds cross them, and contend with them; but he sitteth on the floods, Ps. xxix. 11, as a prince on his throne, enjoining and forcing obedience and submission: 'he bindeth the waters in a garment,' Prov. xxx. 4, as women their sucking infants in mantles, with swaddling-bands, which they cannot get out of; though the sea be such a giant, such a monster, that it swalloweth up thousands, and burieth them in its belly, that it maketh all to shake and tremble when it roareth and rageth, yet to God it is but a little infant, which he ordereth as he pleaseth, and can lay to sleep or make quiet in an instant, when it is never so tempestuous: 'When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick

darkness its swaddling-band,' Job xxxviii. 9. Some earthly princes, heated with passion, and drunk with pride, have cast shackles into the sea, threatening it with bondage if it did not obey them. Xerxes commanded so many strokes to be given the sea, as a punishment of its rebellion against his will; but such actions are the highest folly and madness. Many have had great command at sea, but none ever had the command of the sea save God. As tempestuous and outrageous as it is, it is his quiet prisoner, and stirs not without his leave, nor otherwise than he lengthens its chain: 'I set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,' Job xxxviii. 10, 11.

It may easily be proved that the sea is higher than the earth, and why, then, doth it not overflow it, and drown its inhabitants? Surely no reason can be given but the command the great God hath over it: Ps. civ. 6–9, 'The waters stood above the mountains; at thy rebuke they fled, at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away: They go up by the mountains, they go down by the valleys, unto the place which thou hast founded for them: Thou hast set a bound, that they may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth.' The waters did once cover the earth, till God broke up for them his decreed place, Job xxxviii. 10, and commanded them into their appointed channels. They have a propensity and inclination still to cover the earth again. What doth their constant beating upon their banks with rage and fury, and now and then encroaching upon the earth, and getting ground of it, signify, but their desire and longing to beat down all before them, and turn the dry land into a sea? The only reason why they do not accomplish their ends is, because the great Governor of the world hath set them their bounds, which they cannot pass.

Some men are extreme stubborn and refractory, as immoveable as rocks, resolved and fixed for their own wills and ways; but even these God ordereth at his pleasure. The king of Babylon seemed an untameable beast; he had foraged many countries and kingdoms, and trampled on many idols and false gods; and he cometh in a full career against the people of God, like a lion greedy of his prey, no way doubting but to tear them in pieces and devour them; as you may read in the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth chapters of Isaiah. But mark how God governs this wild ass, and hath this monster at command: Isa. xxxviii. 29, 'I will put my hook into thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.' I will put my hook into thy nose;

an allusion either to a fisher, when he hath the fish fast on his hook, draweth it which way he will, Job xli. 1; or to such rings as men put into the noses of bears to keep them in, and govern them with. My bridle into thy lips, Ezek. xix. 4, 9, my bit in thy mouth, and my curb about thy jaws; an allusion to them that ride horses, who with bridle and bit rein and restrain them, and keep them within compass, Ps. xxxii. 9; James iii. 3. As if God had said, Because thou ravest and ragest like some huge unruly fish, or some fierce wild beast, I will take thee with my hook, and I will ring thee, and curb thee, and lead thee, and draw thee whither I list.

The devils are more untractable than winds, and waves, and men. They have great power, hence called the strong man, Luke xi. 21; and powers, Eph. vi. 12. Their union doth much increase their strength, *vis unita fortior*. They are so much one in their confederacies, and all their conspiracies, that they are called the evil one, the wicked one, Mat. xiii. 28; the devil, 1 Pet. v. 8. Because, though they are many thousands, yet they agree and unite against God, as if they were all but one. They have much knowledge, subtility, and policy to direct their power, *vis consilii expers*, &c. Their excellent natures, their great observation of persons and actions, their long experience of some thousands of years in the world, must needs speak their wisdom, or rather craftiness, to be great.

Add to these their innate implacable hatred of God, which makes them employ all their power, and improve all their policy, to offend and displease him, to break from under his yoke and subjection; yet, in spite of all their might, their craft, their malice, he governeth them as a man doth his prisoners whom he hath in fetters: 'He hath reserved them in chains of darkness,' Jude 6. He hath them ever in the chains, 1. Of their own terrifying, affrighting consciences, which allow them no rest day or night. Indeed all time is a dark, dreadful time to them, and all places are dark, dismal places to them. They are, wherever they go, as prisoners with fetters upon them, yea, such shackles as enter into and pierce their spirits; in chains of darkness. 2. In chains of divine providence: God governeth their persons and all their motions; they go no whither but as he pleaseth, though they go up and down in the earth. As subtle a spirit as the devil is, he cannot touch Job, Job i. 12; no, nor the swine, without God's leave, Mat. viii. 31. He that would read more of the incomparableness of God in his providence, may see it incomparably set forth by God's own mouth in the 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st chapters of Job.

CHAPTER XII.

God incomparable in the work of redemption; he can do all things.

3. He is incomparable in the work of redemption. And truly this work is his masterpiece, pure workmanship; and, indeed, all his works of creation and providence are subordinate to this. All his attributes sparkle most gloriously in this, Ps. cii. 16; all his angels in heaven admire and adore him for this, Rev. iv. 10, 11. This is the work of all his works, which he is so mightily pleased with, and reapeth so much glory and praise from, Isa. xlii. 1, and xliii. 21. No angels, no men, no not all together, could with all their united worthiness redeem one soul: 'None of them can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of the soul is precious, it ceaseth for ever,' Ps. xlix. 9, 10.

None beside God had pity enough for man's misery, or wisdom enough to find out a remedy, or power enough for his recovery.

None had pity enough for man's misery. Boundless misery called for boundless mercy; one deep for another. But where is such mercy to be found among the creatures? Man was a child of wrath, had plunged himself into an ocean of evils and fury, and this required an ocean of love and pity; but creatures at most had but drops. But the Creator had infinite grace for infinite guilt, and infinite mercy for infinite misery: Ezek. xvi. 4-6, 'In the day of thy nativity, thou wast cast out, to the loathing of thy person; thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou salted with salt, nor washed with water.' Here is misery indeed, but what help or compassion from creatures? Truly none: no eye pitied thee, to do any of these things unto thee; who then had pity enough? 'Then I passed by thee, and saw thee in thy blood; then was my time of love, and I bid thee live; yea, when thou wast in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live.' God hath great mercy for great misery, Eph. ii. 4, 5; abundant mercy for abundant misery, 1 Pet. i. 3; a plaster altogether as broad and as large as the sore, John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9; Eph. iii. 19; therefore the Holy Ghost observeth, Luke i. 78, in the work of redemption, the tender mercy of our God from on high hath visited us.

None had wisdom enough to find out a remedy. Had the creatures had pity enough, and kindness enough, they had not wisdom enough to make justice and mercy meet together, and righteousness and grace kiss each other. If God should have offered man his pardon and life, upon condition that he with angels should consult,

and find out some way to satisfy his infinite justice, that was offended by sin; alas, poor man must of necessity have perished. What creature was able to undertake the satisfaction of infinite justice? It would have bankrupt them all to satisfy for one of the smallest sins. And who could have thought of God the creator to undertake it? Who durst have presumed to entertain such a motion in his heart? Could it have entered into the mind of men or angels, that the law might be fulfilled in its commands and curse, the glory of divine justice and holiness salved, and miserable man eternally saved?

No creature would have thought of a way to reconcile the justice and mercy of God; no creature could have thought of any way for it; nay, no creature durst have thought of such a way as God hath found out. No. He that made the world by his wisdom, Ps. civ. 24, when it had unmade itself, new made it by his wisdom. Hence the redemption of man is called *τολυποίκιλος σοφία*, the manifold, the curious, the embroidered wisdom of God; such wisdom as passed the knowledge of angels, Eph. iii. 10; and the Redeemer is called the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 24; in this work is infinite wisdom, because in this work infinite justice and infinite mercy do meet, Rom. iii. 24, 25; Eph. ii. 5, 7; 1 John iv. 9, 10.

Again, None had power to have gone through with the work, if they had had wisdom to have found out a way. There was so much to be done in order to man's recovery, that it would have undone all the world, if they had undertaken it. The powers of hell must be overcome, the curse of the law, and wrath of the law-giver, must be borne. Sin, that was so strong and fast in the heart of man, must be subdued; grace and holiness, against which man had an enmity, must be infused; and what power less than omnipotent could effect either of these? God, who discovered great power in creating the world of nothing, discovered much greater in redeeming the world when it was worse than nothing. In the former he had no opposition; in the latter his law, justice, the devils of hell, nay, man himself, did resist and oppose him. It had been impossible for the Mediator to have borne up, and held out under all those contests with the powers of darkness, the malediction of the law, the fury of his Father, if the almighty everlasting arms had not been under him. Isa. xlii. 1, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold;' Isa. xlix. 8, 9. Therefore you read of power, great power, mighty power, greatness of power, exceeding greatness of power, put forth in the work of redemption: Eph. i. 19, 20, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of

the mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead;' and the Redeemer is called the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24; the arm of the Lord, Isa. liii. 1; his strength, Isa. xxvii. 5; once more we read, 'Thy redeemer is mighty, the Lord of hosts is his name,' Jer. l. 34.

2. He is incomparable, not only in what he hath done, but also in what he can do. He can do what he will, nay, he can do much more than he will do.

He can do what he will. His arm is as large as his mind, and his hand equal to his heart. His will and pleasure is the only boundary of his strength and power: 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and earth, and the seas, and in all deep places,' Ps. cxxxv. 6, and cxv. 3. Can this be said of men or angels? Can they do what they please? Surely no. But the Lord doth what he hath a mind to do: 'He is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, that he doth,' Job xxiii. 13. His heart only can limit his hands, and his strength is determined by nothing but his will. It was the saying of a prince, that he could bear a circle about his head, meaning his crown, but he could not bear a circle about his feet, he would go and come at his own pleasure, and do what he thought fit; but all the princes in the world have fetters about their feet, and chains about their hands. They cannot go whither they please; Isa. xxxvii. 33, 34, Sennacherib would needs go up to Jerusalem, and bringeth an army against it for that end, but his feet were fettered. 'Thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city; by the way that he came, by the same shall he return.' Neither can they do what they please. As they go, not whither they will, but, whither God pleaseth; so they do, not what they will, but, what God pleaseth, Acts iv. 27, 28.

It is God's incomparable prerogative to go whither, and do what he will. God doth not do many things that he can, but he doth all things that he will. He can do more than he will. He cannot do what is sinful, he cannot lie, Titus i. 2; he cannot deny himself, 1 Tim. ii. 13. He cannot do that which implieth a contradiction. He cannot make himself a creature, or make a creature a god, because the doing of these things speak weakness and imperfection, but whatsoever speaketh power or perfection, that he can do: 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think,' Eph. iii. 20. A man may ask much, this world, the other world, a thousand worlds after them, millions of worlds after those, better worlds, greater worlds, the sovereignty and dominion over

them, the command and rule of them for ages, for generations, for ever. A man may conceive more than he can ask; the mind of man is much larger than his tongue. His apprehension doth far exceed his expressions, especially of such a man whose mind is enlightened and enlarged, for of such the apostle speaks, and not contracted and narrowed to sublunary sensual objects. But God can do more than we are able to ask or think, yea, abundantly more; so much more, that we cannot think how much more; nay, exceeding abundantly more, *ὑπὲρ ἐκ περίσσου, valde abundanter,* above abundance.

Is anything impossible to God? Luke i. 37. With God all things are possible, Mat. xix. 26. He is good at everything that is good. Men are good, some at one thing, some at another thing; so are angels: but no man, no angel is good at all things, God only can do everything, as God only can be everything; he only that is universal in his being is universal in his doings. He can make millions of worlds in a moment, and unmake them again as soon; he can kill and make alive in the twinkling of an eye; he can build up, and pluck down, take nature off its hinges, and set it on again; make the waters, when they run never so violently, to stand still; stop the sun in its full career; keep the hottest fire from burning, or so much as singeing a hair. Shall the sun go backward, saith he, ten degrees, or forward? 2 Kings xx. 9, 10; take either, it is all one to me; choose which thou likest best—to me both are equally easy.

CHAPTER XIII.

God incomparable in the manner of his working: he worketh irresistibly, arbitrarily.

2. If you consider the manner of his working, he is incomparable therein also.

1. He worketh irresistibly; he worketh so, as none can hinder him: all the united wisdom, power of men, of angels, cannot stop him at his work. The mighty king Nebuchadnezzar was taught this truth, when he was grazing among the beasts: Dan. iv. 35, 'He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand.' Mark, he doth what he will, and none can stay his hand; the prayers of his people have sometimes stayed his hand, when he was going to slay and destroy, but it was because out of his grace he stayed it himself. Alas, what creature can see, or know, or reach his hand,

that is invisible and omnipresent? Isa. xlviii. 10, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' The counsels of men do not always stand, he makes them to fail and fall: 'He bringeth the counsels of the heathen to nought, and maketh the devices of the people of none effect,' Ps. xxxiii. 10. But none can make his counsel void, or his devices invalid.

What he will do he doth, and there is no withstanding him. If he will bring an enemy against a nation, none can prevent their coming. Calling the ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country—Cyrus that should seize on Babylon, as a ravenous bird on his prey—yea, I have spoken it, and I will bring it to pass. Let me see who shall hinder it; I have purposed it, and I will do it. I would see who dares undertake to oppose it, Isa. xlv. 11, 12.

If he will deprive men of their honours and grandeur, of their estates and treasures, of their might and power, there is no contending with him, it must be done: Job ix. 12, 'Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him?' If he will take away, nothing shall stand in his way. The four great strong monarchies of the world, that successively were the dread and terror of the earth, were taken away by him, and who hindered him? All their policy and power could not prevent him, or hinder their ruin, Dan. ii. 44.

God hath a negative voice upon the motions of all the creatures: 'Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not?' Lam. iii. 27. They who reckon without him must reckon again; they must ask his leave, as well as have his assistance, or sit still and do nothing. Their wheels, though never so well oiled, stand still, or go backward, if he say nay to their motion forward: 'He speaketh to the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars,' Job ix. 7. No day, not the least light in the heavens at night, without his leave; but no creature hath a negative voice upon the least of his actions; what he will do he doth, and never asketh men or angels' leave. Nay, challengeth them to hinder him if they can: Isa. xliii. 13, 'I will work; who shall let it?' Observe his resolution, 'I will work;' he speaks like one in authority, that is above all checks and controls, that can make good what he purposeth in spite of all opposition; I will work. Observe also his challenge, 'Who shall let it?' Would I could see the man, the angel, that durst stand in the way of my motions. The Jews might think Babylon will let; I, saith God, have sent to Babylon, and destroyed all their princes, I have broken in pieces those iron bars; there is no fear that they should hinder my entrance into their city.

He can give a *supersedeas* to the highest attempts and strongest designs of creatures; he can blow on them, and they are soon blasted, all their politic conceptions prove abortive: 'Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought,' Isa. viii. 10. Their most powerful engines prove ineffectual: ver. 9, 'Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.' Some of them talked at a great, at a high rate; 'We will go up against Judah and destroy it, and set a king in the midst thereof, even the son of Tabeal;' but they speak beyond their strength, and reckon, as we say, without their host: 'Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass,' Isa. vii. 6, 7. But none can give a *supersedeas* to the least of his attempts: 'Behold he breaketh down, and it cannot be built up again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening,' Job xii. 14.

2. He worketh arbitrarily, according to his own will; he doth what he will, and he alone may do what he will. It is argued by many, that some princes are not accountable for what they do to any man, but all hold they are accountable to God. They are his stewards and deputies, and must give an account to him of their stewardships. They are his creatures, and are, or ought to be, limited by his laws, and so must be responsible to him for their carriages and government. No king is absolute or arbitrary in his governments, because all kings are his subjects, and owe allegiance to his majesty, and obedience to his commands; but God is absolute and arbitrary, and may do what he will do; everything that he doth is just, because he doth it: 'He doth what he will in heaven and earth, and none can say unto him, What dost thou?' Dan. iv. 35. He is responsible to none for any of his actions; none may question him, much less quarrel with him for what he doth. Angels are far from being arbitrary, his will, not their own, is their rule: Ps. ciii. 20, 'Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.' He only that is above all law is above all transgression, 1 John iii. 4; and he whose will is the only rule of rectitude and righteousness, may well do what he will, Rom. xii. 2.

He hath an absolute illimited propriety in all the works of his hands; he is the great proprietor of all the world, and therefore may dispose of all at his pleasure, Ps. xxiv. 1: Mat. xx. 13, 15, 'May I not do what I will with mine own? Friend, I do thee no wrong.' Though men may have a civil right to their estates, and a natural right to themselves and their children, yet the original in all is still God's. He divests himself of nothing by lending any-

thing to us, or trusting us with it; and therefore he may use what is his own, at his own liberty and pleasure, and none may question or quarrel with him for it.

Again, he is supreme, and so above all answering or accounting for anything he doth: he is the most High, Ps. xcii. 1. It is no disparagement to men or angels to be under a law; nay, it is essential to them as they are creatures; but he that is supreme, and giveth all laws to others, is under no law himself; indeed, if he had a superior, he might be called to account by him: 'But why strivest thou against him? he giveth no account of any of his matters,' Job xxxiii. 13. Why strivest thou against him? Not by open force, but secret murmurings, and logical arguings, against his providential dispensations. It is vain, for he giveth no account of any of his matters. He is not bound to tell thee what he doth, or why he doth it. He hath received nothing from thee, and so not bound to account to thee, Rom. xi. 35. Thou hast no authority to call him to account; what man or angel hath power to call him to account? In the next chapter the Holy Ghost doth fully speak for our purpose: Job xxxiv. 10, 12, 13, 'Far be it from God, that he should do wickedly; and from the Almighty, that he should pervert judgment. Who hath given him a charge of the earth?' Whose deputy is he in the government of the world? If he be a deputy or viceroy to any superior power, then he must keep close to the instructions, and act according to the commission he receiveth from them, or be accountable for his wanderings and deviations; 'But who hath given him a charge over the earth?' What man? what angel? where is he? what or who is he that hath given him a charge? If there were one higher than God to give him a rule, then if he swerved from it, he was faulty; but because he is higher than the highest of beings, and his own law, therefore he may do what he will without blame: 'Who hath enjoined him his way? or can say unto God, Thou hast wrought iniquity?' Job xxxvi. 23. God's way is his method of working, his manner of governing the world. Now, saith the Holy Ghost, who hath any authority over him, to enjoin him his way of working, the path in which he should walk, that in case he stepped aside, he might say unto him, Thou hast wrought iniquity? No, not any; and therefore it is desperate presumption for any to complain of him whatever he doth: 'Who art thou that repliest against God?' Rom. ix. 20. He is a bold man indeed that will contend with his Maker. Who art thou? what manner of man? what monster of men? Who art thou, a clod of clay, a lump of earth, a sink of sin, a firebrand of hell, that thou

darest chop logic with God? For shame! sit still, lay thy hand on thy mouth, and be silent.

CHAPTER XIV.

God incomparable in his working; he doth the greatest things with ease, and without any help.

3. He worketh at all times without weariness, and doth the greatest things with ease. As there is nothing too hard for God, so there is nothing hard to God. He doth the hardest things that are with the greatest ease. Indeed, the great God doth the greatest and hardest things with the same ease that he doth the least things. It is all one to him whether his work be small or great, easy or hard to others; all is easy alike to him.

In the creation, though the building be large and vast, yet with what ease did he set it up! He did not blow or sweat, no, nor so much as stir at his work. The whole world consisteth of the celestial and terrestrial globe, and both were the product of his word. For the heavens: Ps. xxxiii. 6, 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host thereof by the breath of his mouth.' It was but a word, a breath, that produced that vast circumference of the heavens, and all those great luminaries there. So for the earth, 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast,' ver. 9. He only spake the word, and even nonentities obeyed, and became beings. Therefore, in the story of the creation, Gen. i., we find in every day's work God only commanding, and immediately all things concurring, ver. 3, 9, 12.

In his works of providence he doth all things with inconceivable ease.

If he destroy and pull down, it is done with ease. 'They are crushed as a moth,' Job iv. 19. How easily doth a man crush a moth between his fingers! with more ease doth God crush his stoutest enemies. He destroyeth the highest, the greatest, the strongest; the lions, young lions, with a breath, with a blast. 'By the blast of God they perish; by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed,' Job iv. 9, 10. By a blast, a breath; it is easy to breathe, to send forth a blast, for a man; but much easier for God, who breathed into man the breath of life. This can put him to no pain, no toil, no trouble at all. Sennacherib comes against Jerusalem with a great army of warriors, and had, as he saith, counsel

and strength for war. God undertakes to deal with him on the behalf of his own people, and to destroy him; but see with what ease God doth it: 2 Kings xix. 17, 'I will send a blast upon him.' I will never trouble myself to use my artillery, or draw out my great ordnance of heaven, my thunders and lightnings against so many thousand soldiers; I will only blow upon them, that shall be all.

He destroyeth with a word. If he do but speak, it is done. His saying is doing. 'At what time I speak concerning a nation, to pull down and to destroy,' Jer. xviii. 7. When the prophet would speak the certain ruin of the Philistines, he doth it in this manner: 'Woe to the inhabitants of the sea coasts, the word of the Lord is against you,' Zeph. ii. 5; *i.e.*, The case is woeful, your condition is desperate; the whole world cannot save you, for the 'word of the Lord is against you.' Men may talk and boast, and threaten what they will do, when all the while their words are but wind, and their threatened folk live long; but the word of God, like lightning or mildew, blasteth wherever it goes, and burns up to the very root. Julius Cæsar told Metellus, when he would have prevented his robbing the Roman treasury, Young man, be quiet, or I will lay thee dead at my feet. And then, to magnify his own power, addeth, It is harder for me to speak it than to do it. But this is certain, it is as easy for God to do anything as to speak of it; yea, he doth what he will with a word. Now, how easy is it to speak! He destroyeth with a look, with a glance of his eye; and surely that is easy to him that is all eye, that made the eye. 'In the morning watch the Lord looked through the pillar of fire on the host of the Egyptians, and troubled them,' Exod. xiv. 24. He darts out beams of death from his eyes. One look from God will take away the life of the greatest of his adversaries. He destroyeth with a hiss. Oh, how little, how easy a thing is hissing: Isa. vii. 18, 'I will hiss for the flies of Egypt and the bees of Assyria, and they shall come,' &c.

He destroyeth with a turn of his hand: Ps. lxxxi. 13, 14, 'I would soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against them that hated them.' A turn of his hand would have subdued the proudest enemies of Israel, and have stabbed them to the heart.

He delivereth his people with the greatest ease. Whatsoever their straits be, though various and difficult, yet he helpeth them out with ease. When they were in captivity, scattered up and down as exiles out of their own country, he bringeth them home.

But how? truly, 'He saith to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back,' &c., Isa. xliii. 6. And both hearken to his word, that his 'sons come from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth.' When the prophet would beg of him to help his afflicted people, he only desires him to 'command deliverance for Jacob,' Ps. xliv. 4. If he will it, and command it, the work is done.

He succeedeth his ordinances, and maketh them effectual for enlightening the blind and enlivening the dead (great works) with ease. He saith, Live, and the dead sinner liveth, John v. 24. He commandeth success, and ordinances are effectual. 'There the Lord commandeth his blessing, even life for evermore,' Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

Yea, the ocean, that is such a frightful monster, which makes such a horrible noise, and openeth its mouth, roaring and raging, as if it would certainly devour us, is quelled and quieted with ease by him, Job xxxviii. 8–11. When the sea was tempestuous, and frighted the disciples that they awake the Lord Jesus, with what ease doth he cause a calm, 'Peace, be still,' Mat. viii. 27; as a mother would still a crying child: Hush, be quiet, peace, no more, be still; and 'immediately there was a calm.'

4. He worketh wholly by his own power, without the least help from any other. Creatures are all instruments, and act in the virtue of the principal efficient. Angels and men act not in their own, but in the strength of God; they have not some help from God, but all the power by which they work from God. But God acteth wholly in his own strength, he never had nor desired a helping hand from any of his creatures.

In the work of creation he erected this curious large fabric without any tool or instrument: Isa. xliv. 24, 'I am the Lord that made all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' Mark, he made the heavens alone, had none with him to assist him; and he made the earth by himself, called none from heaven to his aid. As he said to Job, 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding,' Job xxxviii. 4. Thou wast far enough off from giving any help. So he may say to angels, 'Where were ye when I stretched out the heavens? declare, if ye have unstanding.' Some give that reason why they are not mentioned in the creation of the world, in the first of Genesis, to assure us, that God did not use their help in his work. The heavens are compared to a curtain, Ps. civ., and to a tent, Isa. xl. 22. Now we know

that when curtains or tents that are very large, are to be stretched out, as the phrase is in that Isa. xliv. 24, there needs many hands to it, one hand will not do it, many pair of hands must be put to it, but God spreadeth out those wide large curtains of heaven alone, Job ix. 8. He borrowed not one hand to it: 'Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong as a molten looking-glass?' Job xxxvii. 18. Was God beholden to thee for affording him thine arms in the unfolding and spreading that broad vast piece?

In works of providence he doth some great things alone by himself: Job xxvi. 7, 'He hangeth the earth on nothing,' without an Atlas to bear it up; and he preserves Moses forty days without food, Exod. xxxii. And he doth all things without the help of his creatures, even there and then when he makes the most use of his creatures. He useth angels and men in the government of the world; he useth many means, as food and raiment, and physic and sleep, for the preservation of our health and lives; but he doth all as much and as surely as if he made not use of any means at all. He is the soul of the world, that actuates everything in it; hence we read, that instruments are called his sword, Ps. xvii. 14; his rod, Isa. x. 5. What can the sword or the rod do without a hand to cut or scourge with them? therefore when his rod boasteth as if it could scourge of itself, Isa. x. 12, 13, and as if it were the hand too, 'By the strength of my hand have I done it; I have removed the bounds of the people, and robbed their treasure;' God quickly contradicts such vain babbling, and confutes such vain-glorious boasting: ver. 15, 'Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith, or the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?' Thou poor proud vain-glorious wretch, thou art a mere axe, a saw, and canst no more move or cut of thyself than a saw or an axe that lieth on the ground, which no man meddleth with. Thou talkest arrogantly and saucily, as if thou didst all when thou didst nothing; I did all, thou wast all the while but the axe and saw in my hand, which I made use of.

1. Whether God have little or great means, means or no means, it is all one to him; there is not a pin to choose, as we say, for he doth as much when he hath means as when he hath none: 2 Chron. xiv. 11, 'It is all one with thee to help with many, or with them that have no power.' It is not the least difference to him, it is not so much as the smallest dust in the balance to turn the scale of victory, whether God have many or few, any or none of his side.

God never made use of any creatures because he had the least

need of them, or the least help by them, but partly because it is his pleasure; he useth them because he will use them: It is his pleasure 'by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,' 1 Cor. i. 21; not that he hath the least aid from preachers. So it is his pleasure by food and sleep to preserve man's life; not that he hath any help from them: 'Thy visitation preserveth my spirit,' Job x. 12. Partly from his own honour. Hereby he magnifieth his sovereignty, and sheweth his dominion over all his creatures, that they are all at his beck, and he can with a stamp of his foot, or a glance of his eye, or a hiss of his mouth, call them from the uttermost parts of the world, to execute his command: 'My hand hath laid the foundations of the earth, my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call they stand up together,' Isa. xlviii. 13. The flies, caterpillars, locusts, stars in their courses, &c., all come at his call. Hereby he magnifieth his power, that can do such great things by weak means. He got himself glory on Pharaoh, when he made pitiful contemptible creatures, as lice and flies, such plagues to him.

And by opening the eyes of the blind, and quickening the dead, by such weak poor instruments as men are, his strength is exceedingly exalted: 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God,' 2 Cor. iv. 7. Hereby he magnifieth his wisdom, viz., in discovering the fitness and aptitude of his creatures to those ends and purposes for which they were created. The use of a tool discovers its worth, by discovering its serviceableness to that for which it was made. Partly to endear creatures one to another; their mutual serviceableness each to other, causeth the greater amity and unity between them, 1 Cor. xii. 21–23.

In spiritual things also God worketh alone, even when he hath many ordinances and ministers to serve him: 'Thou workest all our works in us, and for us,' Isa. xxvi. 12. Not any visions, or prophets, or industry of our own, but thou workest all. What is Paul? what is Apollos? Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase. So then, observe, he that planteth is—a great apostle? no—nothing, and he that watereth is—an eloquent excellent person? no—nothing, but God that giveth the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 5–7. God doth not use preachers because they help him in the conversion of souls; but, as I said before, because it his pleasure, 1 Cor. i. 21; and he turneth it to his honour, 2 Cor. iv. 7; therefore it is often seen that ministers of the largest gifts, of the greatest grace, are not often the most successful in their labours;

because God would have us know, that it is not the parts or piety of the preacher, but his grace and Spirit that doth the work; they are nothing, he is all in all. He made light the first day of the creation, and not the sun or stars till the fourth, to tell the world that he can enlighten it without the sun. It is a great honour to God that he hath so many millions of creatures at his will and pleasure, that he hath so many eyes to see for him, and so many ears to hear for him, and so many hands to work for him; but it is a greater honour to him that he needeth none of them, he can do all without them; that though they are serviceable to him, yet they are not necessary to him; for God and all his creatures do no more, can do no more than God without any of his creatures.

CHAPTER XV.

God is incomparable in his word; he speaketh with incomparable authority, condescension, and efficacy.

Fourthly, God is incomparable in his word; he speaketh after an unspeakable manner: 'Never man spake like him,' no, nor angels, his enemies themselves being judges, John vii. 46. Men may speak high, and speak holily; angels may speak higher and holier, but neither speak like God: 'Behold, he exalteth by his power; who teacheth like him?' Job xxxvi. 22. Behold, wonder at it, he exalteth by his power, is good at acting; 'Who teacheth like him?' is good at instructing, and best at both, and beyond all that ever were; 'Who teacheth like him?' The words are a challenge to the whole world. Bring forth the man, let me see the angel, that can speak or teach like God. He doth not say, Who teacheth beside God? There are many teachers beside God: the inanimate creatures are teachers, the heavens by their constant regular motion, the earth by its fecundity and fruitfulness, according to the law of their creation, teach man obedience and proficiency, Isa. xlviii. 13. The irrational creatures are teachers; man is sent to school to the ant and swallow, and ox and ass, to the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, to learn providence and prudence; to learn wisdom, to discern and improve his opportunities, and gratitude to his Father and benefactor, Prov. vi. 6; Jer. vii. 7, 8; Isa. i. 5; Job xii. 8, 9. Men are teachers one to another. Parents and ministers do, or should, teach those that are committed to their charge or trust, Prov. xxii. 6; Eph. iv. 6. Angels are teachers: the angel

taught Daniel, and helped him to understand, Dan. x. 14; and surely of all finite, they are the most learned and able masters: but he saith, Who teacheth like him? Though many teach beside God, yet none teacheth like God; none speaketh like him, whether you consider the manner, the matter, or the effect of his speech.

1. He is incomparable in the manner of his speaking.

1. He speaketh authoritatively, and in his own name. Good men and good angels may command, but it must be as subordinate magistrates, in the name and authority of their prince and sovereign; but God commandeth in his own name and authority; God gives authenticity to whatever he speaks, and he speaks with authority when he speaks. God speaks as one that hath right and power to command, and as one that, upon his own account, expecteth to be obeyed: *I am the Lord*, is enough to warrant obedience to the whole decalogue. 'Thou shalt have no other God; thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, &c., for I am the Lord thy God.'

His authority is the highest, the greatest reason of any precept, and the strongest warrant for obedience: 'Therefore thou shalt not swear by my name falsely;' why? 'I am the Lord.' 'Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor lay a stumbling-block before the blind;' why not? The deaf cannot hear if I do curse them, nor the blind see if I do lay a stumbling-block before them; 'I am the Lord,' &c., Lev. xix. 12, &c. It is said of Christ, 'He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes,' Mat. vii. 29. He did not beg attention, but enjoin it; nor beseech obedience, but command it. As when princes enact laws, they do not entreat, but require obedience at the peril of their subjects. This is the word of the Lord, and Thus saith the Lord, and The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, is sufficient to awe and require subjection from all that hear it. God is his own authority, not so men or angels; they speak from God, but he from none but himself. His word is a light, Ps. cxix. 104, 105, that discovers itself; and therefore it is called 'The testimony of the Lord,' Ps. xix. 7; because it beareth witness to itself, and needeth not testimony from men or angels. What the essential Word speaketh may be spoken of the declarative word: it receiveth not testimony from man, John v. 34. Men need grounds and reasons, and witnesses too, to prove and vouch what they say to be true, and to be so as they speak; but the word of God is a sufficient authentic testimony to itself; it is his own proof, because what truth itself speaks must of necessity be true.

2. He speaketh condescendingly to the condition and under-

standing of those to whom he speaketh; he considereth the natures and tempers and capacities of his hearers, and accordingly speaks to them; he doth not, as some ministers, speak in an unknown tongue, or soar into the clouds, exceed the capacities of his hearers, that he might be wondered at, not understood; but he observeth their weakness and infirmities, yea, their dulness and incapacity, and teacheth them as they are able to hear him. There are depths in his word for elephants to swim in—to tell the world what and how he could speak, to exercise our industry, and prevent our contempt of it for its plainness—and there are shallows for lambs to wade through, that none might be discouraged. Christ is our priest, and the priest's lips teach knowledge, and he is a merciful priest, Heb. ii. 16. Condescending in what he teacheth, and in the way of his teaching, to the capacities of his hearers.

In what he teacheth. How chary was Christ of charging his disciples with anything that they could not brook: John xvi. 12, 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now.' I have some harder lessons to teach you, but ye are young scholars, and not able yet to learn them, till ye have been longer in my school, and have attained more ripeness of understanding; therefore I will not trouble you now with them, but leave them to my Spirit, who shall prepare you for them, and enable you to learn them: your stomachs are weak, and yet must have that only which is of light digestion—milk, not strong meat, 1 Cor. iii. 2. Your backs are not strong, and therefore I will lay on you none but light burdens, but ye cannot bear them now, and therefore ye shall not hear them now, lest ye should be offended and discouraged at them. When the Jews inquired of Christ why his disciples did not fast often, as well as the disciples of John and the Pharisees: observe the reason our tender-hearted Lord gives, Mat. ix. 16, 17, 'No man,' saith he, 'puts new wine into old bottles, lest the wine burst the bottles; or seweth an old garment to new cloth, lest the rent be worse.' Alas, saith he, my disciples are young beginners, babes in me, at best but little children, not strong men, or fathers, and therefore they must not be called presently to the austerities or severities of religion, lest they, poor souls, should be discouraged in their work, and faint under it; I must proportion their burden to their backs, and lead them their own pace as they are able to go at present. Hereafter indeed they shall be called to suffer great things for my name's sake; they shall be hated and persecuted of all men, but then they shall be fitted for those severities, and undergo them

with courage; but yet such deep points, and obscure notions, must not be offered to novices.

In the way of his teaching he is very tender and condescending; he accommodates his discourse to their apprehension: Mark iv. 33, 'He spake as they were able to bear it;' not as he was able to speak, (he was able to read lectures above the capacities of angels,) but 'as they were able to bear it;' therefore he spake so much to them in parables, because they might the better understand him: for though a parable would make truth more obscure—and so parables and dark sayings are conjoined, Ps. lxxviii. 2, and to speak in parables is opposed to speaking plainly, John xvi. 25, 29—yet a parable revealed, unveiled, as Christ did usually to his disciples, Mat. xiii. 17, 37, makes truth more clear. It gives us the advantage of viewing heavenly truth in earthly glasses, the species and reflections of which we are most able to conceive; therefore our Saviour saith, 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, (or cannot understand,) how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly?' John iii. 12.

The instructions of Christ were like water, Deut. xxxii. 2, which he poured into those narrow-mouthed vessels by little and little, as they were able to receive it; or as rain, which he distilled on his hearers, as rain on the mown grass, by drops, and drop after drop, to refresh them; not by floods to drown them. Jacob considered the children were young, and the cattle were with young, therefore drove gently, lest by overdriving he should wrong them, Gen. xxxiii. 13. So our Lord Jesus considereth what men are, how impotent and infirm, and will not overdrive, overdo, lest he should undo them: Isa. xxviii. 10, 'He gives precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, there a little.'

Will men or angels teach with such compassion, with such condescension? It is a rule of one of the ancients, that he who will teach children, must himself be a child. He must frame and fashion himself to them, and be as one of them, or else he will never teach them. How soon would the dulness and untowardness of man tire out the patience of men and angels, and provoke them to give over teaching them! God's incomparableness herein is fully proved in the incomparableness of God in his patience, in chap. x.

3. He speaks effectually. As he hath power to command us, so he hath power to enable us to obey his commands. Men and angels may tell men their duty, but they cannot teach men their duty; they cannot strengthen them, or empower them to obey. He

speaketh so as men hear, and believe and live: 'He that heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me,' John vi. 45. We have a saying, *Ex quovis ligno non fit Mercurius,* Every man will not make a Mercury. Some so dull and blockish, that none can improve them, or do good upon them, Isa. xxxii. 4, *i.e.*, no creature can; but God can make the dull, the blind, the most ignorant, to conceive and consider, and apprehend and understand the darkest and most difficult points by speaking to them: Isa. xlviii. 17, He teacheth to profit. There is a power that accompanieth his teaching, that doth the work. When he saith, Let there be light in a dark mind, there is light; it is so. He is a God that commandeth light to shine out of darkness, 2 Cor. iv. 6. When he saith, Let there be life in that dead soul, there is life; it is so, John v. 24. Men and angels may call long enough to the blind to see, and the dead to live, and all in vain. But if a God say to a sinner that lieth rotting in the grave, almost eaten up of the vermin of lusts, unsavoury, and stinking in the eyes of all men, Lazarus, sinner, come forth of thy cursed carnal condition; the man that was bound hand and foot, manacled and fettered by the devil, his jailer, comes forth, is loosed of his bonds, and lives for ever.

As the mariners said of Christ, He speaketh with authority, and commandeth the winds and seas, and they obey him; what manner of man is this? Mat. viii. 27: so I may say, Oh what manner of God is this, for he speaks with authority, and the high winds of violent passions, and the fierce waters of boisterous corruptions, and they obey him; they fly, they fall before him! Can men or angels speak at this rate? will sin die at their word? will the soul live at their command? How long may they call to sinners to arise from the dead, before they will, before they can answer their call!

But if God speaks, the most obstinate hardened sinner obeyeth his voice, submitteth to his will, and yieldeth himself up to his word; nay, the very devils are forced to leave their beloved mansions, the souls of men, and to seek and settle their habitations elsewhere. He commandeth, and the unclean spirits come out of men, Mat. viii. 32. If he please but to say, Get thee behind me, Satan, that prince of the powers of the air, that god of the world, who crows so much on his own dunghill, the hearts of the unregenerate, sneaks away like a coward, and must in spite of his teeth obey his command, Mat. iv. 10, 11; yea, God ejecteth him with a word speaking, out of his strongest holds, the souls of old, senseless, seared sinners, and leads captivity captive, and makes this jailer, who laid so many in irons, his prisoner and captive.

CHAPTER XVI.

God is incomparable in his word: in its purity, mysteries, prophecies.

2. God is incomparable in the matter of his speech, as well as in his manner of speaking; if you consider the purity, mysteries, or predictions thereof.

1. The purity of its precepts. His word is the most pure, perfect, exact rule of righteousness that is imaginable. It commandeth good, nothing but good, and all good, at all times; it forbiddeth evil, all evil, and nothing but evil, and always: 'The commandment is holy, and the law is holy, just, and good,' Rom. vii. 12. Holy, as it is a copy of the divine will; just, as it is correspondent to the highest reason; good, as it is most beneficial to the rational creature. It is holy, as it relates to our duty to God; just, as it respects our duty to our neighbours; good, as it concerns our duty towards ourselves. It is holy, as consecrated to the service of God; just, as a transcript of the pure law of nature; good, as it is the measure and standard of all goodness in the creatures. It is holy in what it enjoins us to do; just in what it forbids us to do; and good in both. What laws in the world are in any degree comparable to the laws of God? The Mohammedan laws, which have gained so much credit in the greatest part almost of the known world, are impure laws, allowing revenge, polygamy, and commanding slaughters, oppressions, &c., for the propagation of their religion.

The laws of the severest heathen, Lycurgus, &c., contained but the carcase and body of purity, had nothing of the soul and life thereof. How many sins against the very law of nature did that Lacedemonian lawgiver allow of! And where he or any of the rest did forbid sin, it was in the outward actions, not in the inward affections. Their laws did rather command the covering of sin, that it might not appear abroad, than the killing of sin, that it might not be at all. Their laws were defective as to persons; some men were usually privileged, and not bound to them; as to the parts of men, they gave the inward man liberty, though they restrained the outward as to punishments; the greatest penalty they could think of or impose, was a temporal death. They never dreamed of a hell in another world. But oh how pure, how perfect is the law of God! 'Thy word is very pure,' saith David, Ps. cxix.

So pure, that there is not the least mixture, falsehood, or error in it. It commands all, and nothing but conformity to the mind of the great sovereign, and Lord of all things: 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' Ps. xix. 7. So perfect, that it is not deficient in anything. It commandeth purity in the whole man, in every faculty of the soul, in every member of the body. It commandeth purity in this whole man, at all times, in all companies, in all conditions, in all relations, in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16: Ps. cxix. 1, 2.

It is apparent to common sense, that fallen man could never dream of such strict exact precepts; no, he is so far from it, that he is wholly contrary thereunto, Rom. viii. 7. And angels could not imagine them, unless God had signified his mind to them. For all holiness being a conformity to the will of the Most High God, they could not discern what was holy, what was unholy, any further then they could discover the will of this incomparable God.

2. The mystery of its doctrines. It containeth such depths, such bottomless profundities, that could not possibly have been imagined by men or angels, had not God revealed them. It acquainteth us with things far above the reach of created reason, though not contrary; yet being told us are so correspondent, that there is no ground left for the questioning them. What the great apostle saith upon occasion of one mystery, we may say upon the whole: Oh the depth, 'Oh the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God,' Rom. xi. 33. Oh the depth of the Holy Scriptures. There is a depth in them that none can fathom, because a depth in them that hath no bottom. Great is the mystery of the Bible. Who could think of a woman's coming into the world without a woman, as Eve; of a man's coming into the world without a man, as the Son of man; nay, without man or woman, as Adam? Who could think that the same woman should be a mother and a virgin? But these are small mysteries; who could think that many thousands, millions, living many miles and ages distant, should be fellow-members, and be truly one body, sympathising with, serviceable to, rejoicing in the welfare of each other, and all be united unto, receive influence from, and live wholly by one head, as far from them as heaven is from the earth? Eph. v. 27–30; Col. ii. 19. Who could have thought that three really and personally distinct should be equal, and one in nature and essence? 1 John v. 7.

Who could have imagined that God should become man, infinite become finite, the Creator a creature; the Father of spirits become flesh, and the Lord of life be put to death? Who could

conceive, that he who made all things of nothing, should be made himself of a woman, made by him? That he whom the heavens, and heaven of heavens cannot contain, should be contained in the narrow womb of a woman? That the only bread of life should be hungry, the only water of life be thirsty; the only rest be weary, the only ease be pained, and the only joy and consolation be sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful unto death?

Who could have imagined that one, yea, millions, should be rich by another's poverty, filled by another's emptiness, be exalted by another's disgrace, healed by another's wounds, eased by another's pains, be absolved by another's condemnation, and live eternally by another's temporal death? Who could have imagined that infinite justice and infinite mercy should be made fast friends, and fully satisfied by one and the same action; that the greatest fury and the greatest favour, the greatest hatred and the greatest love, should concur in, and be manifested by one and the same thing? Could men or angels speak such mysteries? Surely no. Several mysteries in the Scriptures were hid from whole ages and generations of men: 'Which in former ages was not made known to the children of men,' Eph. iii. 5. No nor to angels neither: ver. 10, 'To the intent that now unto principalities and powers might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.'

3. The prophecies and predictions of the word. Neither men nor angels can foretell those things which depend not on natural causes, or which may not be deduced from moral or political grounds; and even in such things as these are, they may be, and have been deceived. Therefore it was the subtlety of the old serpent to deliver his oracles often in ambiguous words and in deceitful speeches, that whatsoever happened, his credit might be saved, as his *Aio te Æacida, Romanos vincere posse*, and *Ibis, redibis, nunquam per bella peribis*, &c. But God foretells what hath no print of any footing in nature, what neither moral nor political principles can direct unto, and never fails in his predictions. He foretells the birth of Cyrus one hundred years before he was born, Isa. xlviii. 28; the birth of Josiah, two hundred years, 1 Kings xiii. 2; the conversion of the Gentiles, and falling off of the Jews, above two thousand years before it came to pass, Gen. ix. 27; Isa. xlix. 6, and liv. 9, 10. He foretells the birth of Christ near four thousand years before he came into the world, Gen. iii. 15. And it is very observable how punctual and particular he is herein, as knowing how much the welfare of the world did depend upon the knowledge of the true Messiah: he tells you long beforehand of what tribe he should come,

of Judah; of what family, David's; of what person, a virgin; where he should be born, in Bethlehem; whence he must be called, out of Egypt; what his condition should be in general, full of sorrows and griefs; in particular, that he should be disgraced and reviled, tempted, betrayed, apprehended, deserted by his Father and brethren; that he should die, be pierced, not have a bone broken; be buried; make his grave with the rich and the wicked, and rise again from the dead, and reap the fruit of all his passion to his full satisfaction.

He hath foretold the state of the world and the church in the Revelation, from the primitive times to the dissolution of the world, though it is written in shorthand and in dark characters.

And can any men or angels foretell such things? God challengeth all the gods to do this: 'Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods,' Isa. xli. 21–23. The certain prediction of future contingents is such an inseparable prerogative of the Deity, and such a special privilege of the Original of all things, that he engageth to own their supremacy and acknowledge their sovereignty who can do it. It is such a jewel in his crown, that none ever shared in it: 'I have declared the former things from the beginning: I did them suddenly, and they came to pass: I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass, I shewed it to thee,' Isa. xlviii. 3, 5. It is peculiar to him, who worketh all in all, to foreknow and foretell whatsoever shall come to pass: Acts xv. 18, 'Known to God are all his works, from the beginning of the world,' yea, from all eternity. For he stood on the high mountain of eternity, and thence had a full view of all that his will would produce, and whatsoever should come to pass.

CHAPTER XVII.

God incomparable in his word, as it is converting, affrighting, and comforting.

3. God is incomparable in the effects of his word. His words are works; they are operative, as well as declarative of his pleasure. What he speaketh hath power and virtue in it, as well as weight and value.

1. It is efficacious in converting the soul. The word of God can stop the tide of nature, when it runneth with the greatest violence; yea, it can turn it the quite contrary way. Let a man be in the

height of his strength, in the heat of his youth, ruffling and bustling among the sparks of the times, taking a large draught of carnal pleasures, and having a full gust of sensual delights, making his whole life but a diversion from one pleasure to another, as if he were sent into the earth, as leviathan into the waters, only to play and sport there; when this man is in his best estate, in the zenith of health and strength, in the meridian of his age, promising himself a long day of life, and putting the day of death far from him, and thereby giving himself the more liberty to the service of his lusts, yet if the word of God come to this man, who sucketh in wind as the wild ass's colt, it makes him pluck in his plumes, bid adieu to his foolish pleasures, leave his most beloved lusts, loathe himself for ever loving them. It alters the man's palate; that is bitter now which was sweet before, and he cannot savour what formerly was his heaven and happiness; it changeth the bent and frame of his heart, that now he forsaketh with detestation what formerly he followed after as his only felicity and chiefest good. The wild man is tame, the obstinate man is pliable, and the distracted man is recovered to his wits, Ps. cxix. 9. Men and angels may persuade, but God only can prevail. The words of creatures may work for an outward reformation, but the word of God alone for an inward renovation. He only that made the heart can mend it. Human counsels may do somewhat towards the hiding of the corruptions of nature, but divine instructions are only effectual for the healing of corrupted nature: 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,' Ps. xix. 7. Converting the soul: The law of man may bind the body to its good behaviour, but the law of God alone can bring the soul to its good behaviour. To turn a lion into a lamb, darkness into light, a stone into flesh, death into life, all which is done in conversion, can be effected by the word of none but God, Isa. xi. 8-10; Eph. v. 8; Ezek. xxvi.; Eph. ii. 1, 5. No word but his can take a scion off from its own natural stock, and engraft it into a new stock, Rom. xi. 17; James i. 21; 2 Cor. x. 4; Acts ii. 41, and iv. 4.

2. It is efficacious in affrighting the sinner. He speaks, not as men or angels, to the ears only, but to the hidden man of the heart, and shatters it in pieces. He plants his batteries of threatenings, and terrors, and curses, against the inward man of the conscience, and puts it into an ague of trembling and shaking fits, as we see in Herod, Acts xxiv. 27, and levels it to the ground. This word, in the mouth of a poor prisoner at the bar, frights the proud sturdy judge on the bench. When God speaks, he makes the best people

afraid, and cry out, Let not God speak to us, lest we die, and the best of that people exceedingly to quake and fear, Exod. xix. 19; Heb. xii. 21: 'The voice of the Lord is terrible, it shaketh the cedars of Lebanon, it shattereth the oaks of Bashan,' Ps. xxix. Those that were monsters of mankind for cruelty and barbarousness, for stupidity and searedness, by his word have been terrified in their spirits, wounded in their consciences, cut to the heart, and forced to call out, 'Sirs, what shall we do to be saved?' Acts ii. 37.

The most stubborn, senseless sinner, whom neither mercies nor miseries could move or melt, who mocked at the curses of the law and the wrath of the Lord, and as leviathan laughed at the shaking of those spears, whom, as the man possessed with the devil, no cords could hold, no chains could fasten, but he burst all asunder, when the word of the Lord hath been spoken to him, instead of flying in his face, as formerly, when men have spoken to him, he hath fallen down at his feet, been filled with fears and frights, felt the very fire of hell flaming in his conscience, and become a very *Magor Missabib*, fear or terror to himself round about. The word of God hath stuck in his heart, as the arrow in the side of the buck, allowing no ease whithersoever he hath gone; in the night, scaring him with dreams, and terrifying him with visions; in the day admitting no rest in his flesh, nor quietness in his bones; forcing him in all places, and in all companies, still to carry his jailer, his tormentor, his executioner along with him; and at last, that he might escape a partial and temporal, to leap into a total, an eternal hell. Ah, who knoweth the power of his anger? of his angry word, or is able to fear him according to his wrath? Ps. xc. 11. I may challenge every man, every angel, as God himself doth Job, 'Hast thou an arm like God? Canst thou thunder with thy voice like him?' Job xl. 9. If he utter his word of fury, the rocks are rent in pieces, the most stony hearts are melted; the mountains are moved, the highest and firmliest-seated sinners are shaken out of their places and senses, the foundations of the world tremble and quake, the strongest pillars are troubled, the whole frame and body of nature is affected with a palsy: Ps. xviii. 13, 'The Lord thundered in the heavens, the Highest gave forth his voice;' what followeth? 'hail-stones and coals of fire.'

3. It is efficacious in healing the wounded spirit. When God takes the sword of the Spirit into his own hand, and wields it with his own arm, it makes work, it makes wounds to purpose in the consciences of men; the sleepy soul is now awakened, the secure soul is now affrighted, the senseless soul is now affected with his

sins and misery, Acts ii. 37; the man tasteth the bitterness of his original and actual corruptions, feeleth the weight of divine fury and indignation, findeth the poison to work in his bowels, and racking him with extremity of pain. There is no rest in his flesh, because of God's anger; nor quiet in his bones, because of his sins. The arrows of the Almighty are within him, and his terrors set themselves in array against him, Ps. xxxviii. 4; Job vi. 10. The unquenchable fire flasheth in his face, and destruction (in his thoughts) is ready to lay hold of him; in this condition he knoweth not what to do, for a 'wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14. He trieth creatures, but they can afford him no ease; miserable comforters are they all to him, and physicians of no value. It is the same hand that wounded that alone can cure him; it is the same word that bruised him that must bind him up; let God but speak to this soul that is thus sunk down into hell, and it will be lifted up to heaven. 'Fools, because of their iniquities and transgressions, are afflicted, their soul abhorreth all manner of meat,' (they are so sick that they can relish, take down nothing,) 'and they draw near to the gates of death,' they are almost in, they are on the brink of hell; what course must be used for their cure? Truly this, 'He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction,' Ps. cvii. 17-20. No herb in the garden of the whole world can do these distressed creatures the least good. Friends may speak, and ministers may speak, yea, angels may speak, and yet all in vain; the wounds are incurable for all their words; but if God please to speak, the dying soul reviveth. His word is the only balm that can cure the wounded conscience; 'he sendeth his word and healeth them.' Conscience is God's prisoner, he claps it in hold, he layeth it in fetters, that the iron enters the very soul; this he doth by his word, and truly he only who shuts up can let out; all the world cannot open the iron gate, knock off the shackles, and set the poor prisoner at liberty, till God speak the word.

David professed, he had quite fainted, had it not been for this *aqua vitæ*, this cordial water: 'I had perished in my affliction, but thy word comforted me,' Ps. cxix. 92. The boisterous billows went over my soul, and I had sunk in those deep waters, had not thy word borne me up.

CHAPTER XVIII.

If God be incomparable, 1. *How great is the malignity of sin, which contemneth, dishonoureth, and opposeth this God!*

I come now to make some application of this great and weighty truth; it may be useful by way of information, counsel, and comfort.

First, By way of information. If God be so incomparable, that there is none on earth, none in heaven comparable to him, it may inform us,

1. Of the great venom and malignity of sin, because it is an injury to so great, so glorious, so incomparable a being. The higher and better any object is, the baser and the worse is that action which is injurious to it. To throw dirt on sackcloth is not so bad as to throw dirt on scarlet or fine linen. To make a flaw in a pebble or common stone is nothing to the making a flaw in a diamond or precious stone. Those opprobrious speeches, or injurious actions, against an ordinary person, which are but a breach of the good behaviour, and bear but a common action at law, if against a prince, may be high treason, because of the excellency of his place, and majesty of his person. The worth and dignity of the object doth exceedingly heighten and aggravate the offence. How horrid then is sin, and of how heinous a nature, when it offendeth and opposeth not kings, the highest of men, not angels, the highest of creatures, but God, the highest of beings; the incomparable God, to whom kings and angels, yea, the whole creation is less than nothing! We take the size of sin too low, and short, and wrong, when we measure it by the wrong it doth to ourselves, or our families, or our neighbours, or the nation wherein we live; indeed, herein somewhat of its evil and mischief doth appear; but to take its full length and proportion, we must consider the wrong it doth to this great, this glorious, this incomparable God. Sin is incomparably malignant, because the God principally injured by it is incomparably excellent. It is one thing to displease and offend man, a poor slimy worm, a mean shallow creature, of the same make and mould with ourselves; and another thing to displease and offend God, that unconceiveable immense being: 'If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him,' (a human judge may undertake to determine and comprise offences between them that stand upon the same level,) 'but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall

entreat for him?' 1 Sam. ii. 25. Here the case is altered, here is a pitiful finite creature offending an infinite Creator; what man dares arbitrate this difference, nay, who can intercede and interpose between these two?

Hence, hence it is that there is no less than an infinite demerit in sin, because it is an injury to an infinite majesty. Nothing discovers sin to be so great an evil, as its opposition to so vast, so matchless, so great a good, so incomparable a God.

The evil of sin appeareth somewhat in the injury it doth to our estates; 'The drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty, and idleness shall clothe a man with rags,' Prov. xxiii. 21: to our names; 'The name of the wicked shall rot,' Prov. xi. 7: to our families; 'A wicked man troubleth his own house,' Prov. xv. 27, and iii. 33: to our neighbours; 'One sinner destroyeth much good,' Eccles. iii. 18: to our nation; Jer. xviii. 7, 8; Ps. cvii. 34, 'He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein:' to our bodies; 'Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine,' Prov. xxiii. 29, 30, and v. 11: to our souls; 'He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul,' Prov. viii. 36. But all this discovers nothing of sin's evil, to that which is discovered by the injury it doth to the incomparable God, because our estates, our names, our families, our neighbours, our nations, our bodies, our souls are all nothing, infinitely less than nothing, to the great God, the incomparable. This, this is the only glass that discovers the horrid ugly features, the monstrous frightful deformities of sin's face, that it is a wrong to the blessed God, to him who is the high and lofty One, Isa. lvii. 15.

1. In that sin is a breach of this incomparable God's law, a violation of his command, a contradiction of his will: 'Whosoever sinneth transgresseth the law, for sin is a transgression of the law,' 1 John iii. 4. Neither the greatness nor smallness of our obedience or disobedience is to be valued according to the greatness or smallness of the thing commanded or forbidden, nor according to the greatness or smallness of the good or hurt done to man by it, but according to the greatness of the person who commandeth or forbiddeth.

2. In that it is a contempt of this incomparable God's authority, a slighting his dominion, a denying his sovereignty: 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' Exod. v. 2, is the voice of every sinner. 'We are our own, say they; who is Lord over us?' Ps. xii. 4. They know no maker, and therefore own no master.

For this cause the sinner is said to cast the incomparable God behind his back, as not worth minding or regarding, 1 Kings xiv. 9; and to despise him as some mean inconsiderable being, 1 Sam. ii. 30; 2 Sam. xii. 9, 10.

3. In that it is a dishonouring this incomparable God, whose name alone is excellent. It layeth him low, who is the Most High, Ps. xcii. 1: 'Through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?' Rom. ii. 23, 24. It is ill to reproach a common man, worse to reproach a nobleman or a prince; but oh, how bad is it to reproach the great God! to blaspheme that worthy name. Sin layeth the honour of this incomparable God, which is more worth than millions of worlds, in the dust, and trampleth on it. The Romans, when they would mark one with ignominy, and brand him with reproach, would put him out of their senate, or any place of credit in which he was, and pull down his statue or monument, if any were erected to his honour. Sin degrades and dethrones God, it will not allow him to be the Lord and supreme of the world, and it defaceth his image wherever it finds it, as one contrary expels another; it disgraceth his justice, thence is called unrighteousness, 1 John i. 6; his wisdom, thence is called folly, Prov. v. 23; his patience, thence is called murmuring, Jude 16; his power, thence is called weakness, Rom. v. 8; his mercy, thence is called unthankfulness, Luke vi. 35; his knowledge, thence is called ignorance, and a work of darkness, 1 Pet. i. 14; Eph. v. 8; his truth, thence is called a lie, and lying vanity, Ps. lviii. 2; Jonah ii. 8. In all these, and every way, it disgraceth his holiness, which is his glory, and the glory of all his attributes, Exod. xv. 11, thence is called filthiness, 2 Cor. vii. 1; uncleanness, Rom. i. 24.

4. In that it is a fighting with, and to its power, a destroying this incomparable God. The murder of any man is heinous, it is horrid, it is against nature, and it is the extremest mischief that one creature can do to another, Gen. iv. 10; Mat. x. 28. The murder of a father or a sovereign is far more heinous, as being more against nature, and against more engagements to the contrary. He is cursed that mocketh his father, and his heart smote him who did but cut off the skirt of his king's garment, though his enemy; what a monster then is he that kills either! but oh, what a monster, what a devil is that which destroyeth, as far as it is able, the good, the gracious, the great, the glorious, the incomparable God! Truly, sin is such a monster, such a devil, that were its power equal to its spite, and its strength answerable to its malice, the living God should not live a moment.

Omne peccatum est Deicidium, all sin is God-murder: the sinner hates God, Rom. i. 30, and hatred ever wisheth, and, as it is able, worketh the destruction of its object. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' Ps. xiv. 1, *i.e.*, it is a pleasing thought to him, to suppose there were no God; as to guilty prisoners, to imagine there were no judge to arraign and condemn them; whom we fear as hurtful to us, we hate, and wish he were taken out of the way. In order hereunto the sinner strives with God, and contendeth with him, Job xxxiv. 7; fighteth against him, Acts v. 39. 'He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty;' he puts forth all his force, and venteth all his strength; 'he runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers;' runs upon him as one enemy upon another, furiously, without fear, and, as he is able, gets him down, sets his feet on his neck, trampleth on him, and crusheth him, Job xv. 25, 26.

Oh how odious, how loathsome, how abominable is sin, that breaks the law, slights the authority, dishonours the name, and to its utmost dethrones and destroys the being of this incomparable God, this self-sufficient, independent, absolutely perfect, eternal, incomprehensible, infinite being, which alone deserves the name of being, and to which all other beings are no beings! Reader, should this God of glory appear to thee, as once to Abraham, and shew thee a glimpse of his excellent glory, that is above the heavens; should he discover to thee but a little of that greatness which the heavens and heaven of heavens cannot contain; of that duration which had no beginning, hath no succession, knoweth no ending; of those perfections that admit of no bounds, no limits, that are incapable of the least addition or accession to them, and then should say unto thee, as when he appeared to Saul, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Man, man, why despisest thou my commands? why despisest thou my authority? Sinner, how darest thou dishonour my name, and seek my destruction?—what wouldst thou then think of sin? Oh, what wouldst thou then think of thyself for thy sins? Shouldst thou not have other thoughts of sin, and of thyself for sin, than ever yet thou hast had? Wouldst thou not even loathe thyself for being so base, so vile, so unworthy, yea, so mad as to offend and affront, and fight against such a God? Wouldst thou not cry out as Job, 'I have sinned against thee, and what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?' Job vii. 20. I have sinned against thee, an incomparable, infinite, inconceivable being: I have wronged thee, the most high, most holy, most blessed God,

and what shall I do unto thee? what amends shall I make thee? what reparation shall I give thee? It is impossible for me, should I weep and wail, and lament and grieve millions of ages, to make the least satisfaction for the injury I have done to such a majesty. Or wouldst thou not say as he in another place, 'Lord, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes see thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,' Job xlii. 5, 6. Lord, I have heard of thee somewhat by thy word, and by thy works, they have told me somewhat of thy beauty and glory, and excellency; howbeit I believed them not, but now mine eyes have seen thy majesty, and royalty, and sovereignty, wherefore I abhor myself, that ever I should transgress thy godly will, that ever I should blaspheme thy great name, that ever I should despise thy supremacy, and fight against thy majesty. Ah, I reprobate turn away mine eyes from myself, cannot endure to behold myself; my stomach is turned against myself, I loathe myself, that ever I should presume and dare to contest and contend with, to wrong and injure thine excellency; I recant all that I have been, all that I have done against thee, and repent, am unfeignedly grieved for it, heartily wish I had never been so, never done so; but since what is past cannot be recalled, I will as far as I can be revenged on myself, for my impudency and distraction, I will lie in the dust, lick the dust, own myself to be much baser and viler than the dust, I will abhor myself in dust and ashes.

This, this is the venom, the malignity of sin, that it is opposite and contrary, offensive and injurious to the incomparable God. This is the consideration which should humble us most for our sins. This was the weight that pressed David down most, and laid him so low in the day of his repentance: 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight,' Ps. li. 4. Though he had sinned against the enemies of God, in occasioning their blasphemies; against the friends of God, in grieving their spirits; against his whole kingdom, in provoking God to plague them; though he had sinned against Bathsheba, in defiling her body and soul; against Uriah, both in the matter of his wife and life, and against his own body and soul; yet he looks upon these, though great in themselves, yet little, nothing comparatively; the head of the arrow that pierced his heart, was this, 'I have sinned against the Lord,' 2 Sam. xii. 13. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned.' The injury which he did to himself and others, was so inconsiderable, in comparison of the injury he did to God, that he passeth it quite by, in his penitential psalm, and sticks wholly upon this, 'Against thee, thee

only have I sinned.' This is the strongest, the weightiest argument to drive and dissuade from sin; none is like it. When Moses would couch all arguments in one, he useth this instead of all: Num. xxxii. 23, 'But if ye will not do so'—*i.e.*, perform your promise to assist your brethren, till they have conquered their enemies, and are settled in their possessions, what then? what great harm if they do not? Is it not that they sin against their brethren, and wrong their own souls? No, but behold, mark it, it is worthy your attention, and most serious consideration—'ye have sinned against the Lord,' the great, the mighty, the almighty, the incomparable God.

CHAPTER XIX.

If God be incomparable, how great is the madness and misery of impenitent sinners!

Use 2. Secondly, If God be such an incomparable God, it informeth us of the madness and misery of sinners.

1. Of their madness in daring to offend him, and to contend with him. 2. In wilfully losing this incomparable God.

1. How great is their madness in daring to offend him, yea, in daring him to his face! Reader, if thou shouldst see a man without any cause striving with a whole army, hacking and hewing, and provoking them to kill him, you would think, Surely the man is mad, otherwise he would never thus wilfully run himself into a certain ruin. I tell thee every time thou wilfully breakest his laws, thou actest more like a distracted man; for thou fightest against that God who is stronger than millions of armies, who is almighty, and thou provokest him to destroy thee who can wink thee into the other world, and look thee into the eternal lake, and hiss thee into hell-flames. Man, art thou God's match, that thou offerest to enter the list with him? 'Do ye,' saith the apostle, 'provoke the Lord to anger? are ye stronger than he?' 1 Cor. x. 22. It is one thing to provoke men to anger, and another thing to provoke the Lord to anger. Man hath but a little heart, and a small hand; his anger and power cannot at utmost exceed finite; but God's heart and hand, his anger and power, are both infinite. If the wrath of a king be a messenger of death, what, thinkest thou, is the wrath of immensity, and the stroke of omnipotency? What then is the wrath of a God? Sinner, dost thou know what thou doest when thou breakest his laws, slightest his love, dishonourest his

name, grievest his Spirit? I tell thee thou provokest a God who is incomparable in holiness, and hath threatened thy destruction; who is incomparable in power, and can accomplish what he hath threatened; and who is incomparable in truth, and cannot but make good with his arm what he hath spoken with his mouth: 'Woe be to him that striveth with his Maker: let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth,' Isa. xlv. 1. God is a God of peace, he hates strife; but if men will be striving, he wisheth them rather to meddle with those that are their matches, poor silly worms like themselves, and not to strive with their Maker, who is infinitely their superior in authority and power, and every perfection. Here is sauciness indeed, for a pitiful nothing to challenge almightiness to battle. 'Who' in his wits, in his senses, that were not quite distracted, 'would set briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them up all together,' Isa. xxvii. 4. Briars and thorns are not match to a fire; how easily, how speedily, how certainly doth the fire consume them as soon as it layeth hold of them! How much less is weak man a match for God, who is a consuming fire! When the Roman poet was desired to make verses against his emperor, he answered, *Nolo in eum scribere qui potest proscribere*, I will not jeer and jest with him that can kill me in earnest. Our Saviour tells us, 'What king going to war against another, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? or else while the other is a great way off sendeth to him ambassadors, and desireth conditions of peace?' Luke xiv. 31, 32. Oh that when the devil and flesh entice the sinner to sport with and make a mock of sin, Prov. x. 23, he would but consider, it is ill jesting with edged tools, it is ill jesting with unquenchable burnings; for how 'can his heart endure or his hands be strong in the day that the great God shall deal with him?' Ezek. xxii. 14.

2. Again, How great is their madness who will venture the eternal loss of this God, this incomparable God, for every base lust! What a madman is he who will stake a million against a mite, a crown against a crumb, substance against shadows, all things against nothing, the blessed boundless God against a moment's sensual delight! Was not Shimei bereft of his wits, to hazard his life for a little uncertain worldly profit by his servant? The Lord Jesus doth most fitly call him a fool, who would hazard and lose the incomparable God for a little corruptible gold, Luke xii. 20. The Spirit of God speaks the prodigal to be beside himself, when he left bread, bread

enough, bread enough in his father's house, for husks, and not a bellyful neither, and among swine, Luke xv. 18–20; and when he came to himself he considered what a madman he was, to wallow among swine, and feed on such brutish fare, which could never fill his belly, when he might have been feasting among the children of God in his Father's house, with plenty of what is bread indeed, able to satisfy a capacious heaven-born soul. Friend, think of it seriously the next time thou art tempted to sin, will this oath, or this cup, or this theft, or this wantonness, or this neglect of duty, balance the everlasting loss of the incomparable God? Will this lust, this moment's pleasure, make amends for the loss of him who is eternal life, and a river of unconceivable and unchangeable pleasures? Shall I be so besotted, bewitched, distracted, as to lose real mercies for lying vanities, the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns, the food of angels for the world's scraps, a precious soul, an inestimable Saviour, an incomparable God, for a toy, a trifle, a poor empty gilded nothing? Did ever any in Bedlam buy so dear, or sell so cheap, or manifest the like madness?

2. Of the misery of sinners. They shall lose this incomparable God for ever; nay, they must have him for their everlasting enemy.

1. Their misery consisteth partly in this, that they must depart for ever from this incomparable God: Mat. vii. 23, 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;' Mat. xxv. 41, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.' Oh how dreadful a sound will the word *depart* make in the sinner's ears; yea, what a deep wound will it make in his heart! Depart from me. Ah! whither do they go that go from God? To depart from riches and honours, and carnal comforts for ever, will affect and afflict him to purpose who placeth his happiness in them; to lose health, and liberty, and friends, and relations for ever, is no inconsiderable loss to him that knoweth not where to have them made up. To lose the ordinances of God, seasons of grace, the tenders, entreaties, invitations of the gospel for ever, is such a loss that a sensualist is incapable of conceiving the greatness of. To lose the communion of perfect spirits, the company of glorious angels, the blessed exercises of the heavenly host for ever, will not a little affright and amaze and vex and terrify the wicked, when they once come to have their eyes opened, and their consciences awakened in the other world. But to depart from the incomparable God for ever, to lose the only paradise of pleasures, the only fountain of living waters, the only author of true felicity; to lose the unsearchable mine of riches, the inexhaustible well of salvation, the inesti-

mable Sun of righteousness; to lose the dearest father, the wisest guide, the strongest shield, the sweetest love, the closest friend, the tenderest mercy, the richest grace, the highest honour, the only happiness; to lose the Lord of life, the Lord of glory, the Lord of lords; to lose the God of hope, the God of all grace, the God of all consolation, the God of peace, the God of gods, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the incomparable God; and to lose him totally and for ever, is the loss of all losses, is such a loss as no tongue can declare, no mind can conceive, is such a loss as never was the like before it, nor shall, nor can be the like after it. He that hath lost God, hath nothing left that is good, he hath lost all that was worth having or saving: 'Lord, whither shall we go if we go from thee? thou hast the words of eternal life,' John vi. 68.

Reader, how great is the sinner's loss in the other world, how great soever his gain is in this! Ah! 'where is his hope, though he hath gained, when God shall take away his soul?' Job xxvii. 8. Can the greatest gain counterbalance the loss of him to whom the whole world, yea, millions of worlds, are trash and trifles?

The greatness of any loss is to be measured by the excellency and value of that which we lose; therefore if God be so incomparable in all perfections, the loss of sinners, who lose this God totally and eternally, must be an incomparable loss. As there is no gain equal to the gain of a God, all other gains are but painted baubles or butterflies to this; so there is no loss equal to the loss of a God, all other losses are but bugbears to fright children with to this; this is a loss with a witness, a loss which nothing can countervail, supply, or make up, in which all that is good is gone for ever. As Micah said to the Israelites, when they asked him what he ailed to cry out so, 'Ye have taken away my god, and what have I more?' Judges xviii. 22. So will the sinner in the other world screech horribly, and complain heavily of his deceitful flesh, which now he makes such provision for, Thou hast taken away my God, and what have I more? I am poor, a beggar, nothing worth, worse than nought, wholly ruined, utterly undone by thee, I have lost my God, and with him all that is good.

Reader, if thou livest without God, ponder, oh ponder in the midst of all thy gettings, what thou art losing, yea, what thou shalt lose, if thou dost not return, for ever and ever. Did the disciples weep and wail, that they should see the face of a good man no more on earth: 'Sorrowing most of all, for the words that he spake unto them, that they should see his face no more'? Acts xx. 38. And

dost thou think it will not fill thy heart with sorrow, and cut it with anguish, to hear the blessed God, the incomparable God, say to thee, Sinner, farewell, farewell for ever, thou shalt see my face no more for ever! Believe it, those words will sound more dolefully in thine ears than thou art now aware of; they will be a passing bell to all thy hopes, and joys, and comforts, and delights; they will be a knell to toll the death and burial of whatsoever may be refreshing and reviving to thee, of all thine ease, and rest, and liberty, and peace, and health, and strength, and friends, and relations, and all that may in the least conduce to thy comfort or happiness. Now possibly thou canst be merry enough without God; thou hadst rather have his room than his company, preferrest a life without him before a life with him; and sayest unto him, 'Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job xxi. 14. And the reason of this atheism and profaneness, is thine ignorance; thou knowest not what a fountain of life, what bowels of love, what a hive of sweetness, what an ocean of happiness the blessed incomparable God is, neither believest what Scripture speaks hereof; but when once thou enterest into the other world, and hast lost this God irrecoverably, thou shalt know what thou hast lost; but then, if ever, that saying of the wise man will be verified, 'He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow,' Eccles. i. 18. And then thou shalt believe the truth of the glass of Scripture in its representations of the beautiful face of God, though thy faith will be the faith of a devil, to thy terror and torment. Ah, sinner, when thou shalt know and believe what a vast treasure, what a river of pleasure, what a perfect good, what fulness of joy, what solid comfort, what real satisfaction, what a weight of glory thou hast lost for ever, without the least hopes and possibility of regaining, and lost for base, vile, sordid lusts, for a little foolish brutish momentary pleasure; what thoughts, thinkest thou, will then seize thee? what anguish and remorse surprise thee? Ah, how wilt thou loathe and hate, and curse thyself for thy folly and madness! thou wilt gnash thy teeth for envy at them that sit at heaven's table, feasting with the fruit of the tree of life, and drinking of the pure rivers of water which flow from the throne of God and the Lamb: and thou wilt weep and wail for thy own distraction, that thou shouldst refuse the offers of all those dainties, and delicates, and delights, when they were made to thee in the day of thy life; that thou shouldst shut thy own mouth, and wilfully refuse all those rich and costly cordials, and shut the door of heaven and happiness against thee with thine own hands. Ah, sinner, little

dost thou know at the present what it is to lose this God. Other losses may be corrective, but this is destructive; God whips in others, but he executes in this; other losses may be the part of his children, but this is the portion of devils. All joy, all comfort, is stabbed to the heart, pierced through, the heard-blood of it is let out with this one word, sharper than any two-edged sword, Depart: 'Write this man comfortless,' (as it was said of one, Jer. xxii. 30,) 'a man that shall not prosper all his days.' Write this poor soul comfortless, a soul that shall not have a bit of bread, a drop of water, a glimpse of light, a moment's ease, a crumb of comfort, all the long day of eternity. Ah, friend, think of it betimes: 'Woe be to thee if God depart from thee,' Hosea ix. 12.

2. Their misery consisteth in this also, that they shall have this incomparable God for their enemy. As there is no friend like God, and therefore their privative misery must be great, exceeding great, inconceivably great; so there is no enemy like God; and therefore the positive misery of sinners must be matchless and beyond all comparisons. The greater any one's power and anger are, the greater their misery is who fall under the stroke of that power and the force of that anger. God is incomparable in power; he worketh arbitrarily, irresistibly, omnipotently; he hath a mighty and an almighty arm. God is incomparable in anger; his anger roots up, pulls down, kills, makes horrid slaughters, removeth the mountains, shaketh the foundations of the earth, is a consuming fire, burning and wasting all that comes near it. 'Thou, even thou, art to be feared; for none may stand when thou art angry,' Ps. lxxvi. 7. Woe, therefore, to them that have this God for their enemy; 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. x. 31. David chose rather to fall into the hands of God than men, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14, because he was a child of God, though afflicted sharply by him; for love can consist with anger, though not with hatred; and therefore desired, since he must be scourged, to be whipped by a loving Father, who would consider his strength, what he could bear, as well as his fault and offence, and accordingly use his rod, rather than by a cruel enemy, who hated him, and had not the least mercy or pity for him. Beside, this world is the stage whereon the mercy of God acteth its part. Justice must have its course and solemn triumph in the other world. He is here good to all; his sun shineth, and rain falleth upon the just and unjust, Ps. cxlv. 9; Mat. v. 45. Therefore, it is better for any man upon earth to fall into the hands of God than the best friend or nearest relation in the world. But the sinner is the object only of God's wrath, of his hatred, of his abhorrency, after death. God then

puts off all pity, all tenderness, all bowels towards him; and the other world is the place wherein his justice, that is now clouded and eclipsed, shall shine forth in its full force and strength, and appear in all its beauty and brightness. And, therefore, it must of necessity be a fearful thing for a poor creature to fall into the hands of the living God; to have nothing but his naked flesh, his own weak soul, to bear the stroke of infinite power, set on and urged to strike home by infinite anger, and that for ever.

All the rackings and torturings, the extreme pains and aches, the violent convulsions and consternations, the dreadful horror and anguish, the everlasting chains of darkness, the never-dying worm, and the fire that never goeth out, of the devils and damned, are but the expressions and fruits of the matchless power and anger of this incomparable God. Therefore they are called wrath, Rom. ii. 5; the wrath of God, John iii. 36; and wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10. Reader, think of it; if the wrath of a king, a man like thyself, though clothed with more civil power and strength, be as 'the roaring of a lion,' Prov. xix. 12, which makes all the beasts of the forest to quake and tremble, Amos iii. 6, what then is the wrath of an almighty, infinite God? If he wound his friends, the objects of his eternal choice, the travail of his beloved Son's soul, those on whom he intendeth to glorify the riches of his love and grace for ever, in the day of his anger for their disobedience, with the wound of an enemy, yea, with the wounds of a cruel one, Jer. xxx. 14; if he break their bones, and cause the arrow of his quiver to enter into their reins; if he fill their souls with bitterness, and make them drunk with wormwood; if he makes them water their couches with tears, and go mourning all the day long; if his anger causeth them to roar incessantly, and his terrors make them distracted; if he be to them as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places; —how will he wound thee, his enemy? how will he deal with thee whom he infinitely hateth? What a bear, what a lion, what a fire will he be to thee! how unable wilt thou be to stand under, and yet how impossible to avoid the weight of his omnipotent arm and infinite anger! Lay it to heart timely, and make thy peace with him through his Son, that thou mayest prevent it. Sure I am thou wouldest not fry in flames, or boil alive in a furnace of scalding lead a thousand years, for this whole world's command ten thousand years. Ah, why then shouldst thou, for a little profit, a little pleasure, a little honour for a few days,—for thy life is but a vapour,—bring thyself under a necessity of frying in the flames, and boiling in the furnace of the Almighty God's anger for ever and ever? O friend, be wise on this side the other world.

CHAPTER XX.

If God be incomparable, how monstrous is their pride who compare themselves to the incomparable God!

Thirdly, If God be such an incomparable God, it informeth us what abominable pride and desperate presumption they are guilty of who compare with and prefer themselves before this God. If he be so transcendently excellent in his being, attributes, word, and works, how desperately saucy and impudent are they who put themselves in the balance with God! 'Behold, all nations to me are as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken me? or to what will ye compare me?' Isa. xl. 17, 18. To liken God to any is the grossest idolatry, and to liken any to God is the highest arrogancy. Babylon, that sets herself in the throne of God, and exalteth herself above all that is called God, is the mystery of iniquity, the man of sin, in truth, the dregs of the very devil, 2 Thes. ii. 9. It is a debasing God, not to adore him, and admire him according to his excellent majesty and vast immensity; what a debasing then is it of God to compare him to poor pitiful nothings, as all men and angels are to him! He debaseth himself to open his eyes upon men, upon angels, to behold things that are done in heaven and earth, Ps. cxiii. 5. But he will not debase himself to compare with men and angels; he scorneth to put himself into the scales with them; he is infinitely above and beyond all comparatives, all superlatives. Comparisons, we say, are odious; but no comparison that ever was hath in the least degree that odiousness which this hath, for a man or an angel to compare with their Maker. The slime, and clay, and earth may very much better compare with the potter; both are narrow, limited beings; both are earth and clay; yet the potter would think it a great dishonour to him, who hath a body curiously wrought, and a heaven-born spiritual immortal soul, and desperate arrogancy in the clay and dirt which he trampleth on, to compare with him. And is it not greater pride in man to compare with God, when there is an infinite distance between them in all things? Yet so ambitious and arrogant is man that he dares to do this. Angels and Adam both aspired to equal their Maker; they would needs be independent and self-sufficient; they endeavoured to cut off the entail, and to hold wholly and only of themselves; but they ruined themselves, and made themselves baser than beasts, by

aspiring thus to raise themselves to that impossible pitch of a partnership with God.

It is a favour that men and angels may be like God in some rays and beams of his holiness and purity; but it is impossible for men or angels to be like God in the rich jewels of his crown, his independency, absolute perfection, self-sufficiency, infiniteness, and supremacy. He stamped some impressions of himself upon his creatures, but he took no impressions of his creatures upon himself; if they were made in his likeness, he was not made in their likeness; it is devilish impudency and blasphemy for the highest creature to weigh with the Creator. This was Lucifer's pride, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars, I will be like the most High,' Isa. xiv. 13, 14. But his pride got a fall, and a shrewd one too. God cannot brook a rival, he cannot bear an equal, there must be but one sun in the heavens. A prince may take it kindly from his subjects if they endeavour to imitate him in his mercy, justice, temperance, chastity, and in those things that are general and common to him and them, because hereby his subjects honour him, for by their imitation of him they acknowledge excellency in him; but if his subjects shall undertake to imitate him in his regalia, those things that are proper to him as a king—should they aspire to make laws, to make peace and war, to wear the crown, sway the sceptre, and ascend the throne, he could not bear it, but would judge them rebels guilty of high treason and worthy of death, because hereby they extremely dishonour him, viz., in making themselves equal to him, and robbing him of that superiority which God hath given him. So God is pleased and delighted that men and angels should resemble him in those perfections of his that are common and communicable, as to be patient, and meek, and loving, and righteous, and heavenly, and holy, because hereby they glorify him, Mat. v. 16. But if the creatures should go about to be like him in the peculiar cognisances of the deity, his self-sufficiency, independency, governing others at their will, enacting laws to oblige the consciences of others, exacting worship from their fellow-creatures; so God cannot, God will not suffer it, for hereby they go about to rob him of his supremacy, to dethrone and ungod him. How often doth God tell us in Scripture to quell such presumptuous thoughts, that he is not man's fellow, man's familiar: 'God is not a man,' Num. xxiii. 19. 'I am God, and not man,' Hosea xi. 9. 'He is not a man as I am,' saith Job, chap. ix. 32. Though God was pleased out of his infinite grace to become man, that man might once more be like God in those communicable properties

forementioned, yet he will not permit it, nay, it is altogether impossible for man to become God, and be like him in the special prerogatives of the deity. There is still an infinite distance between the divine and the human nature. They who prate of being godded, and turned into the essence of the deity, as some have impudently and blasphemously written, are either intolerably weak or devilishly wicked, or both. Now, because many are guilty of the strange presumption to compare with God who little think it, I shall very briefly name two or three sorts of men.

1. Such as quarrel with the precepts of God, as if they were too strict, too precise, too pure, and that God commanded more than was needful, Ps. ii. 2; Rom. viii. 7. This is a comparing with God, yea, a preferring ourselves before God; and such speak as if they would be in God's throne to make laws, and as if they would enact better laws, more conducing to and convenient for the welfare of mankind. Because man hath vitiated his nature and distempered all his faculties, he is angry at God for enjoining him a strict diet, and forbidding him what would feed his disease. A foul stomach loatheth the wholesomest food.

2. When men question the providences of God, as if they were not good, and wise, and righteous, these compare, yea, prefer themselves before God; their voice is like Absalom's: Oh that I were judge! things should not go thus at six and sevens; see here is none to do justice to you. Oh that I governed the world! there should be no such disorders as are now, no such inequality amongst men. The righteous should not perish, nor the wicked flourish as they do. These ways are not equal, Ezek. xxxiii. 17, 20. These men contend with God for sovereignty: 'Why strivest thou with him?' Job xxxiii. 13. These men accuse God of folly, and think themselves wiser; 'but shall he that contendeth with God instruct him?' Job xl. 2. He that complains of God's dealings undertakes to teach God in what manner and by what means the world should be better governed. These men compare with God for justice, nay, condemn him of injustice: Job xl. 8, 'Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?'

God's ways are often secret; his paths are in the seas, and his goings in deep waters, Ps. lxxvii. 19; and because men cannot fathom them, therefore they find fault with them. He writes his mind often in shorthand, in dark characters, and because poor blind man cannot read them, therefore he wrangleth with them: 'Thy judgments are a great deep,' Ps. xxxvi. 6.

3. When men tax the decrees of God, as if they were unrighteous,

partial, and ordered with respect of persons, they then compare with God, as if, in case they had been at heaven's council-table when all things were debated and concluded, there should have been more mild and moderate, more just and righteous resolves and conclusions. These men think and speak evil of the things they understand not; and it would become them better to mind faith and repentance, and ensure their effectual calling, than pry into or meddle with those secrets of heaven. No man hath a line long enough to measure God by; his eternal works and ways are beyond all our understandings and apprehensions, and so much fitter for our admiration than curious disquisition, Rom. ix. 17–24.

4. Once more: those princes, or masters, or parents, which command what God forbids, or forbid what God commands, compare with God and usurp his authority; for their power to command, and right to be obeyed, must, in their conceits, be equal to God's, or else why do they give laws in opposition to his? or how can they expect to be obeyed? They who command divine worship to bread and wine, and places, or any creature, compare with and prefer themselves before God, which is desperate pride and presumption, 1 Kings xxi. 9–11; 2 Sam. xiii. 28.

CHAPTER XXI.

If God be incomparable, then incomparable service and worship is due to him.

Fourthly, If God be an incomparable God, then incomparable service and worship is due to him. All service must be suitable to its object. The higher the prince, the higher honour he doth and may expect. The heathen were sensible of this, that such worship must be given to their deities as was suitable to them; therefore the Persians, who worshipped the sun, offered to him a flying horse, noting strength and swiftness, because the sun was strong to run his race. God is a great God, and therefore must have great worship. Solomon gives this reason why the temple, the place of God's worship, must be great; 2 Chron. ii. 5, the house which I build is great; why? for great is our God above all gods. A great palace is most suitable and becoming a great prince. It reflects upon God, it is a slighting him, to give him anything that is ordinary, as it is to a king to be put off with common entertainment at the houses of his subjects. As he is the best, so he will be

served with the best. 'Cursed be the deceiver who hath in his flock a male, and offereth to the Lord a corrupt thing.' Why, what is the matter, that there must be such care about, and choice of his sacrifices? God himself gives you the reason, and a good reason for it: 'For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen,' Mal. i. 14. Petty princes may be owned and served with petty presents; but a great king, a great sovereign, must have great sacrifices.

When the prophet had described the incomparable excellency of God, how all nations were to him as the least drop in a bucket to the ocean, and the small dust in the balance to the whole earth, as nothing and less than nothing, he presently infers, 'Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts thereof for a burnt-offering,' Isa. xl. 15–17. Lebanon abounded in all spices for incense and perfumes, and in cattle for sacrifices and burnt-offerings; but all the spices and perfumes there, all the beasts and cattle there, were below and insufficient for so incomparable a being; he is so great that no service can be great enough for him.

1. This incomparable God calls for incomparable awe and reverence. Excellency commandeth awe. 'Should not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you?' Job xiii. 11. Should not the vastness of his perfections provoke you to awfulness in your conversations? 'His name alone is excellent,' Ps. cxlviii. 13. The greater distance between any persons, the greater reverence is expected. The husband is the head of the wife, therefore she is commanded to reverence her husband, 1 Cor. vii.; Eph. v. 33. There is a great civil distance between masters and servants, therefore the command runs: 'Servants be obedient to your masters with fear and trembling,' Eph. vi. 5. But now between God and us there is an infinite distance, and therefore there ought to be, if it were possible, infinite reverence; he is so vastly above and beyond all others in excellency, that he alone deserves the name of excellency, therefore his name is holy and reverend, Ps. cxi. 9, and he is to be greatly feared. The greatest excellency calleth for the greatest reverence. 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, he is to be feared above all gods,' Ps. xcvi. 4. This use David makes of God's incomparableness: 'Who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord?' what then; what followeth on this? 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him,' Ps. lxxxix. 6, 7; because in our whole conversations we must walk with God, therefore we are com-

manded 'to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long,' Prov. xxiii. 17. But because in ordinances we have more immediately and specially to do with him—then we are said to appear before him, Ps. xlii. 2—therefore we are bound therein to be most awful and reverential. Subjects shew most reverence in the presence-chamber of their sovereign. Oh with what awe and dread should mortals appear in the presence of him who inhabiteth eternity! should dust and ashes draw nigh to the mighty possessor of heaven and earth? Eccles. v. 1, 2, 'Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; be not rash with thy mouth, let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God;' but why all this care and caution? 'for God is in heaven, and thou art on earth.' His incomparable majesty calleth for incomparable reverence: majesty is dreadful. He is clothed with majesty, Ps. xciii. 1, all over majesty, therefore let all the earth stand in awe of him. He is adorned, surrounded with majesty, therefore we must be filled with the awe of him. Isa. ii. 10, 19, 20, fear and majesty are three times conjoined. His incomparable power calls for incomparable reverence. Power is awful; and the greater the power is, the greater awe is required. Mat. x. 28, 'Fear not them that can kill the body, and can do no more; but fear him who is able to cast soul and body into hell.' As if Christ had said, I know you are of timorous spirits, and men of fearful tempers; ye are apt to tremble, and to be frightened at everything; well, I will direct you how you may make this passion advantageous to you—viz., by turning the stream into its proper channel, by placing your fear on its proper object; I will tell you of one worthy of your fear, who deserveth to be feared: so, Luke xii. 4, 5, 'I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear,' I will offer you an object meet for your fear, 'Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.' You are apt, like children, to be frightened with bugbears, and to dread them that can only raze the skin and pinch the flesh, and at the most can but take from you a life that will fall of itself within a few days; well, I will advise you whom to stand in awe of: Fear him that can kill you and damn you, that can send your bodies to the grave, and your souls to unquenchable flames; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

2. This incomparable God calls for incomparable humility and lowliness of spirit from us. The height of God must lay man low, and the matchless excellency of God make him base in his own eyes. When we behold ourselves in the glass of those that have

little or nothing that is good or praiseworthy, or that have less than ourselves, then we spread out our plumes, and are puffed up with pride, and judge ourselves comely creatures; but if we would behold ourselves in the glass of the incomparable God, in whose sight the heavens are unclean, in whose presence angels vail their faces, to whom ten thousand suns are perfect darkness, and all the world less than nothing; how should we pluck in our plumes, and abhor ourselves for our pride! Man never comes to a right knowledge of himself, what a pitiful, abominable wretch he is, till he comes to a right knowledge of God, what an excellent incomparable majesty he is. As when men stand high, and look downward on those below them, that are meaner and viler than themselves, their heads are giddy, and swim with conceitedness, they then are somebody in their own opinions; but when they look upwards to the great God, the sun, the soul, the substance of all worth and excellency, that meagrim or high-mindedness is prevented. The best men upon a sight of God, the incomparable God, though the more excellent he is, the more cause they have of joy in having so rich a portion, yet instead of loving, have loathed themselves, and instead of admiring, have abhorred themselves. When Isaiah saw the God of glory sitting on his throne in his brightness and beauty, encircled with millions of celestial courtiers covering their faces, as ashamed of their drops in the presence of the ocean, and crying, Holy, holy, holy, as apprehending his purity beyond all their expressions, and his perfections exceeding all their apprehensions, what thoughts had he of himself? Oh what a poor, pitiful, contemptible creature did he think himself; yea, what an uncomely, loathsome, abominable creature was he in his own eye! 'Woe to me,' saith he, 'I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts,' Isa. vi. 4, 5.

3. This incomparable God calls for incomparable love, the top, the cream of our affections. Good is the object of love. *Amor est complacentia boni*, according to the moralists; the greater therefore the good is, the greater love it requireth; and God being the greatest good, must have the greatest love. This is the great and first command, Mat. xxii. 37; this is, as I may say, the only command, Deut. x. 12; this is all the commands in one, Rom. xiii. 10. Love is the decalogue contracted, and the decalogue is love opened and explained. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind,' Mat. xxii. 37. God being the greatest perfection, must have the greatest affection. The greatest love (for God is love, 1 John iv. 8) calls

for the greatest love. He deserves the greatest extensively, the heart, soul, mind, strength; the greatest intensively, all the heart, all the soul, all the mind, all the strength. Reader, thy love to him must be so great that thy love to thy father, mother, wife, child, house, land, and life, must be hatred in comparison of it, and in competition with it, Luke xiv. 26. The truth is, there is nothing worthy of our love like God; nay, there is nothing worthy of our love beside God. All our friends, and relations, and estates, and worldly blessings, are nothing lovely, but as they are his creatures, his comforts, instruments for his glory, and as they have relation to him; nay, sabbaths, sacraments, seasons of grace, are no more lovely than as they are his institutes, and means of communion with his majesty. 'I love the habitation of thy house,' (why? because) 'it is the place where thine honour dwelleth,' Ps. xxvi. 8. Once more; grace itself is not lovely, but as it is the image and conformity unto, the pleasure and delight of, that which fitteth and maketh meet for the love, embraces, and fruition of this incomparable God. Desire and delight are the two acts of love, distinguished only by the absence or presence of the object. When the object beloved is absent, the soul acts towards it in desire. When the object is present, the soul acteth towards it in delight. The former is the motion, the latter the rest and repose of the soul. Now the incomparable God must have incomparable desires, panting, Ps. xlii. 1, longing, yea, fainting, out of vehemency of desire, Ps. cxix. 20, 40, 81. God must be desired above all: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' The incomparable God must have incomparable delight: 'I will go to the altar of God my joy, of God my exceeding joy,' Ps. xliii. 4. The soul must be ravished, ecstasied in the presence and enjoyment of God, Cant. ii. 4.

4. The incomparable God must have incomparable trust. The more able and faithful any person is, the more firmly we trust him. Now, God is incomparable in power, he hath an almighty arm; incomparable in faithfulness, he cannot lie, Titus i. 2. 'It is impossible for him to lie,' Heb. vi. 18. Therefore God must have our surest love and firmest faith, Heb. vi. 18; Rom. iv. 20. We must esteem his words as good as deeds; and rely on all he promiseth as if it were already performed. We must not stagger or waver, but 'draw nigh to him with full assurance of faith,' Heb. x. 22. His bonds must be looked upon, for they are as good, as ready money; and we must rejoice in hope of the good things promised as if we had them in hand, Rom. v. 2, 3.

5. This incomparable God must have incomparable obedience in the whole course of our lives. The more virtuous, or gracious, or honourable, or excellent, the person is with whom we walk, the more we weigh our words, and ponder the paths of our feet, and watch over ourselves. God is incomparable in purity, in jealousy, in majesty, in excellency; therefore they who are ever under his eye and in his presence, and who walk with him, must walk, not as they do when with ordinary persons, carelessly and negligently, but circumspectly, accurately, exactly, to a hair's-breadth, as on a ridge, ἀκριβῶς, Eph. v. 15. His law must be kept to a tittle, in every punctilio, as the apple of the eye, Prov. vii. 2, which is offended with the least mote of dust; and this obedience must be not only at some seasons and in some actions, but always and in all things. 'As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation,' 1 Pet. i. 15.

All our service to this incomparable God must be incomparable. Little service is unsuitable to a great God, 1 Chron. xxix. 1, 2. 'David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work (*i.e.*, of building the temple) is great; for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God,' &c.

Fifthly, If God be an incomparable God, it informeth us of his infinite grace and condescension, to take so much notice of, and do so much for man. The height of the person that bestoweth a favour, and the meanness and unworthiness of the object on whom it is bestowed, doth exceedingly advance and heighten the grace and goodness of him that doth it. Oh what grace is it then for the most High, the God of heaven, the God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, to manifest such respect to vile, sinful dust and ashes, yea, to them that are rebels and traitors against his majesty, and thereby worthy of hell! David admireth it, and is amazed at it, Ps. viii. 1. 'O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! and thy glory is above the heavens.' What followeth? 'What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?' That God, the excellent God, the God famous in all the earth, the God glorious above the heavens, should mind man, poor, silly, simple man—weak, frail, dying man—sinful, filthy, polluted man—lost, wretched, miserable man, could not but affect the heart of David with admiration and astonishment. 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?' He is altogether below thy thoughts, and unworthy to

be a moment in thy mind: 'Or the son of man that thou visitest him?' He doth not deserve to be visited by the beasts of the earth, much less to be visited by the angels of heaven, and least of all by the God of heaven. He may well say as the centurion, 'Lord, I am unworthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee,' Mat. viii. 8. David wonders that God should mind man so much as to make the heavens, and those glorious lamps there, for his use and comfort: 'When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast made; what is man that thou art mindful of him?' But how much more cause had he to wonder that the heaven of heavens, the God of heaven, the Sun of righteousness, the light of lights, should do so much, and be so much himself for the good and comfort of man!

God doth manifest much grace and condescension in taking such care of men's bodies and outward concerns. You would think it a great grace and condescension in a king to take care night and day of a poor beggar, to see to it himself, and not to leave it to servants or any others, that he have food, and raiment, and liberty, and peace, and safety every day, that his bed be made well and easy for him every night—that when he is sick he have physic, and cordials, and tendance, and should constantly visit him himself in person, that in all his wants he be supplied, in all his weaknesses supported, in all his dangers defended, and in all his distresses delivered; if this king should never stir from this beggar, but do all this in his own person; if he himself should spread his table, and provide his food, and be at the sole charge of his garments, and put them on, and make his bed, and stand by him all night while he slept, to prevent any evil that might befall him, and go up and down with him all day to protect him and counsel him, and relieve him, as occasion required, you would be amazed at the favour and kindness and condescension of this prince. Believe it, reader—surely seeing is believing—the King of kings, and Lord of lords, he whose name is 'I am,' he to whom all the kings and princes and potentates of the world are dross and dirt and dung, the incomparable God doth more than all this, very much more for thee every day and every night, and that in his own person. He sendeth thee all thy bread, and drink, and clothes, and makes them refreshing to thee. He provides thy habitation and lodging, and commandeth sleep for thee. He is with thee continually in all thy outgoings, incomings, to preserve thee alive, to enable thee to thy motions, to succeed thy lawful undertakings, to relieve thee in thy necessities,

and to defend thee from all thine adversaries. And is not this condescension worthy of all admiration? Oh what grace is it, that the incomparable God, who hath millions of glorious angels waiting on him, and ten thousand times ten thousand always ministering to him, should thus wait on, and watch over poor crawling worms, night and day for good, Acts vii. 2; Job vii. 20; Ps. iv. 8; Hosea ii. 8; Gen. xxxii. 9–11; Ps. xxxiv. 3–5; Heb. i. 3; Ps. cxlv. 5, 7. Job wonders that God should condescend to correct man for his faults: 'What is man, that thou dost magnify him? that thou settest thine heart upon him, that thou visitest him every morning?' &c., Job vii. 17, 18. How much then doth God condescend, to be his constant guide and guard, to keep him night and day lest any hurt him? Oh the grace of this God! This incomparable God doth much more magnify his grace and condescension in the care he is pleased to take of men's precious souls. Herein he sheweth the riches of his mercy, the exceeding abundant riches of his grace, Eph. ii. 5, 7. Reader, is it not condescending grace in the highest degree, nay, beyond all degrees, for this self-sufficient, absolutely perfect, incomparable God, when the soul of man lay naked, starving, restless, encompassed with enemies, unpitied of all creatures, weltering in its blood, gasping for breath, ready every moment to fetch its last, and to be seized on by devils, dragged to their dungeon of darkness, there to fry in untolerable flames for ever; for him to look on man in this loathsome condition with an eye of favour and love, to clothe it with the righteousness of a God, to feed it with that flesh which is meat indeed, and with that blood which is drink indeed, to give it rest in his own bowels and bosom, to bind up its wounds, and raise it from the dead, and make it free from the slavery of Satan and his bondage to sin and death and hell, and to adopt it for his own child, accept it as perfectly righteous, marry it to his only-begotten, the heir of all things, dwell in it by his own blessed Spirit, and carry it on eagle's wings, and conduct it safe through the wilderness of the world, and in spite of all the lions and wolves, and serpents and adders, and giants, and Anakims and Canaanites that opposed it, to bring it to a heavenly Canaan, to fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasures, and crowns of life, and weights of glory, there to reign in and with his own incomparable majesty for ages, generations, millions of ages, yea unto all eternity? Friend, friend, what is condescending grace, if this be not? Alas, the incomparable God had no obligation to man, he stood in no way need of man, he is incapable of the least good by man; he would have been as happy as he is at present, if the race

of mankind had been ruined and had perished. Besides, he was infinitely disobliged by man, and had all the reason in the world to destroy him; and yet he is pleased to be as studious of man's welfare, and as solicitous about it as if it had been his own. Abigail wondered that David, anointed to a kingdom, should take her to be his wife; she scarce judged herself worthy to wash the feet of his servants, 1 Sam. xxv. 41. Mayest not thou wonder more that the incomparable God should marry thee to himself, who art unworthy to be his servant? David admired that God should do so much for him. Hast thou not cause to say as he did, Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me up hitherto, pardoned, instructed, renewed me, taken me into thy own family? And yet, as if this were a small thing in thy sight, thou speakest of thy servant's house for a great while to come, thou art pleased to speak of thy servant for an everlasting kingdom of honour and pleasure, 2 Sam. vii. 18. And this condescending grace, or gracious condescension, is much the more admirable, if we consider the means by which this great work of man's recovery was effected. The incomparable God that is so great, so high, without all bounds, beyond all understanding, becomes a weak, weary, hungry, contemptible man. Reader, here is amazing condescension. The Lord of all becomes a servant, the Lord of glory becomes of no reputation, the bread of life is hungry, and the only rest is weary, and the prince of life is put to death. This is that which angels pry into with such astonishing pleasure, that God should become man, the lawgiver be made under the law, he that tempteth no man to evil, neither can be tempted to evil, should be violently tempted many days together by all the powers of darkness, the only blessing should be made a curse, that liberty should be in bonds, and truth itself belied, and justice condemned, and heaven be laid in the belly of the earth. This is marvellous grace, indeed, such as passeth all knowledge, Eph. iii. 18, 19. If all the glorious cherubims and seraphims, angels and archangels, had condescended to have been turned into toads and serpents, it had not been by the thousandth part so great a condescension, as for the incomparable God to become man; for those heavenly spirits, and toads and serpents, do *convenire in aliquo tertio*, meet in the genus of creatures; there is but a finite difference between the former and the latter. But God and man meet in no third, in no genus; between them there is an infinite distance. There never was, there never shall be, there never can be the like condescension.

CHAPTER XXII.

Labour for acquaintance with the incomparable God: motives to it. The knowledge of God is sanctifying, satisfying, saving.

Secondly, This doctrine may be useful by way of counsel.

1. Study the knowledge of this God, who is so incomparable. We are all ambitious to be acquainted with persons that are eminent and excellent in place, or power, or parts, or piety, and judge it our interest and an honour to us so to be. If we could hear of one as strong as Samson, whom no cords could hold, who could slay hundreds with a jawbone; or of one as old as Methuselah, who could tell us what was done in many centuries of years; or of one as wise as Solomon, who could speak to the nature of all creatures, and answer the hardest questions we could put to him; or of one as holy as Adam in innocency, or the elect angels, who never broke the law of their Maker, but were as pure and perfect as when they came immediately out of his hands; how should we throng, and thrust, and crowd to such men! what pains should we take! what cost should we be at to obtain the favour and honour of their acquaintance! Surely, we should think, we could never view them enough, or value them enough, or know enough of them, or discourse enough with them. But, alas, what are such men, if we could find them in the world, to the blessed God? What motes, what drops, what poor pitiful nothings! What is a strong Samson to the Almighty God, but as straw, as chaff, as rotten wood, as all weakness! What is the age of Methuselah to the duration of the eternal God, to whose age millions of years add not a moment, but as a minute, as nothing! Ps. xxxix. 5. What is the wisdom of Solomon to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are in the only wise God, but a curious web of folly! Col. ii. 9. What is the holiness of an angel to the holiness of God, but as a candle to the sun, yea, as perfect night and darkness to the noon-day! Oh, therefore, how shouldst thou labour to know this God! How industrious shouldst thou be to be acquainted with him! When the queen of Sheba had heard of the extraordinary knowledge and abilities of Solomon, she came from the utmost parts of the earth to see his person, and to hear his wisdom. But behold, reader, a greater than Solomon is here. Solomon was an idiot, an innocent, to this object, which I request thee to know: 'The understanding of God is infinite,' Ps. cxlvii. 5: 'There is no searching of his

understanding,' Isa. xl. 28. Indeed, it is bottomless, and therefore can never be found out. His knowledge can never be known fully, no, not by angels themselves. Do men beat their brains, and consume their bodies, and waste their estates, and deny themselves the pleasures of the flesh, as many heathen have done, for the knowledge of nature, of the heavenly bodies and their motions, of the sea and its ebbing and flowing, of the earth and the creatures thereon; when after all their search, they were still at a loss; and for all the knowledge they attained, they proved but learned dunces? what wouldst thou then do for the knowledge of the God of nature, of the mighty possessor of heaven and earth, of him to whom all things are less than nothing, of him the knowledge of whom will make thee wise to salvation? O friend, this is the only knowledge worth seeking, worth getting, worth prizing, worth glorying in: Jer. ix. 23, 24, 'Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, nor the rich man glory in his riches.' Worldly knowledge, strength, wealth, are not worth glorying in; what then is? The next verse tells you: 'But let him that glorieth, glory in this, (in what?) that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord,' &c. This is a jewel that a man may boast of, and glory in, that he knoweth me, that I am the Lord.

There is an excellency in all knowledge. Knowledge is the eye of the soul, to direct it in its motions; it is the lamp, the light of the soul, set up by God himself to guide it in its actions. The understanding of man is the candle of the Lord, Prov. xx. 27. Without knowledge, the soul is but a dungeon of darkness and blackness, full of confusion and terror; but there is an incomparable excellency in the knowledge of this incomparable God. The object doth elevate and heighten the act. There is a vast difference between the knowledge of earthly things and heavenly things, between the knowledge of wise, strong, faithful, merciful, just, holy men, and the only wise, omnipotent, unchangeable, righteous, most holy God. Only, before I proceed to the urging this use, I would desire thee, reader, to take notice what knowledge of God it is which I am pressing thee to labour for. It is not a mere notional speculative knowledge, though a knowledge of apprehension is a duty, and necessary, Eph. v. 17; Ps. cxliii. 8; Heb. viii. 9, 10, but an experimental knowledge: 'Thou hast made me to know wisdom in my secret parts,' Ps. li. 6. The heart is called the secret part, because known only to God, 1 Kings viii. 39; such a knowledge as affecteth the heart with love to him, and fear of him, and hatred

of what is contrary to him; true knowledge takes the heart as well as takes the head, Ps. i. 6; 1 Kings viii. 38; Phil. iii. 10; and influenceth the life: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,' Col. i. 9, 10; John x. 4, 5. Right knowledge, though it begin at the head, doth not end there, but falls down upon the heart to affect that, and floweth out in the life to order and regulate that: Col. i. 10, 'We pray for you, that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;' for what end, and to what purpose? 'that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.'

To enforce this use, I shall give thee two or three motives, and as many means.

To encourage thee to study the knowledge of this God, consider these three properties of it.

1. The true knowledge of this God will be a sanctifying knowledge. If thou hast anything of a man, I mean of reason in thee, holiness, which was thy primitive perfection, which is the image of the incomparable God, and will fit thee for his special love and eternal embraces, will be a strong and cogent argument with thee. Now this knowledge of God will conform thee to God, render thee like unto him, who is the pattern and standard of all excellency. As I said before, knowledge is the eye by which we see God, and the vision of God causeth an assimilation to him: 'But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. The blackamore that often looked on beautiful pictures brought forth a beautiful son. We are often changed into the postures and fashions, yea, and dispositions, of those whom we much converse with on earth. Surely, then, acquaintance with the gracious and holy God will make us in some measure to resemble him.

Other knowledge pollutes and defiles the soul. Oftentimes, the more men pick the lock of nature's cabinet, and look into her riches and treasury, her secrets and mysteries, the more atheistical they are, and forgetful of the God of nature. Hence *religio medici* is irreligion. They see so much of the operations of nature, that they ascribe the principal efficiency to the instrument. And hence the wisdom of the philosophers, counted the wisest men in the world, is folly, 1 Cor. iii. 19; and though they professed themselves to be wise, yet they became fools, and were guilty of all manner of

wickedness, Rom. i. 22, to the end. And what was the reason but this, they knew not God, with all their knowledge? 1 Cor. i. 21. Ignorant heads are ever accompanied with irreligious hearts, and both are attended with atheistical lives, Eph. iv. 18. The apostle tells us of the heathen, that they were estranged from the life of God, a holy life, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. So Hosea iv. 1–4. But the knowledge of God purifieth the soul. As the sun conveyeth heat along with its light, so grace is multiplied through the knowledge of God, 2 Pet. i. 2. When Moses had conversed with God in the mount, his face shone, that the Jews could not behold him. When a soul hath once acquainted himself with the blessed God, his life will shine with holiness; therefore David counselleth his son Solomon to know the God of his fathers, and to serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind: first to know him, then to serve him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

This knowledge must needs be a sanctifying knowledge, because it renders sin abominable, the world contemptible, God honourable, and the soul the more humble.

The knowledge of God will render sin most abominable to the soul; it renders sin to be exceeding sinful. The miseries that befall us in our estates, names, bodies, souls, nay, all the curses of the law and torments of the damned, do not discover the ugly, loathsome features, and monstrous deformed nature of sin, like the knowledge of this incomparable God. Job confesseth his sin: chap. xlii. 2, 'I uttered things that I understood not;' nay, he abhorreth himself for his sin, ver. 5. But whence came he, who sometime justified himself too much, now to abhor himself? He gives us the reason or cause of it: 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,' I had some knowledge of thee before, 'but now mine eyes see thee,' I now have a clearer and fuller knowledge of thee, 'wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The more we know the greatest good, the more we shall hate the greatest evil.

The knowledge of God will render the world contemptible to a Christian. None undervalue the creature but those who have had a sight of the Creator; neither can any trample on the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, but those who know him who is the riches, and honours, and pleasures of the other world. They who never saw the sun, wonder at a candle; and they who never knew the blessed God, wonder at, and are fond of poor low things, mean, small, pitiful things on earth. But the whole world, with all its crowns, and sceptres, and diadems, and delights, is but a

dunghill to him that hath seen the incomparable God. Moses could refuse the honour of being the adopted child of a king's heir, reject the pleasures of Pharaoh's court, and prefer the reproaches of Christ before all the treasures of Egypt, when he had once got a sight of the incomparable God: Heb. xi. 25–27, 'For he saw him that was invisible.'

The knowledge of God will render God more honourable in our esteems. The more we know of many things and persons, the more we slight and despise them; the more we know sin, the more we loathe it; the more we know ourselves, the more we abhor ourselves; but the more we know God, the more we love him, and the more we admire him. The reason of all the contempt and affronts which we offer to God is our ignorance of him. The whole world lieth in wickedness, as a beast in its dung, or vermin in their slime, 1 John v. 19; but the reason is what Christ speaks: John xvii. 25, 'Father, the world hath not known thee;' for the apostle saith, 'had they known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory,' 1 Cor. ii. 8. They who know God, cannot but see infinite reason why they should love, and fear, and honour, and please him all their days. Why, do you think, is God so much wondered at, and worshipped in his church, more than in other parts of the world? Why doth he inhabit their highest praises, Ps. xxii. 3, and greatest blessings and thanksgivings, but because he is known more there than in other parts of the world? In Judah is God known, therefore his name is great, his name alone is excellent in Israel, Ps. lxxvi. 1.

The knowledge of God makes us humble. We never are so low in our own eyes as when we see the most high God. The more we know of men that are more vain, and foolish, and wicked than ourselves, the more we are exalted and puffed up; but the more we know of God, of the great God, the incomparable God, the most holy God, to whom we are as nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, the more we abase ourselves.

When David is acquainted with the excellency of God:—'O Lord, my Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, and thy glory is above the heavens!' Ps. viii. 1—what low, little, diminutive thoughts hath he of himself and others; ver. 4, 'What is man? or, what is the son of man?' What a poor, pitiful, contemptible thing is man! What a vain, empty, insignificant nothing is the son of man! We are ashamed of our rush candles, or glowworms, and hide our heads in the presence of the sun. The holiest man abhors himself for his unholiness before the most holy God. So Job xxv.

2, 'Dominion and fear are with him;' ver. 3, 'There is no number of his armies;' ver. 5, 'Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not, and the stars are not pure in his sight: how much less man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm,' ver. 6. A worm is the most despicable, contemptible creature; every beast trampleth on it: such a creature is man in his own apprehensions, when he once understandeth the incomparable God.

When Isaiah had seen the Lord of hosts, though he were a holy man, he crieth out, 'I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts,' Isa. vi. 3, 4. He never saw so much of his own uncleanness, as when he saw him in whose presence the heavens are unclean. Other knowledge, like wind in a bladder, puffeth up, 1 Cor. viii. 2, but the knowledge of God, as fire nigh the bladder, shrinks and shrivels it up to nothing.

2. The knowledge of God is a satisfying knowledge. A man may know much of creatures, and the more he knoweth the more unquiet and restless he is; his knowledge, as wind to the stomach, may fill, and pain, and trouble him, but cannot satisfy him; for creatures are not that savoury meat which the heaven-born spiritual immortal soul of man would have, and must have, if ever it be contented. The greatest students, who have wearied and tired out their brains and bodies in the search of nature's secrets, have found by experience, that they 'spent their strength for what is not bread, and their labour for what will not satisfy;' and they have known the truth of the wise man's saying, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' Eccles. i. 18.

That knowledge which satisfieth must be of an object that is suitable, in its spirituality, to the nature of the soul; in its all-sufficiency, to the manifold necessities of the soul; and in its immortality, to the duration of the soul; if either of these be wanting in it, the soul cannot receive satisfaction by it, because without all these the soul cannot be perfectly happy; and till it find that which can make it perfectly happy, it will be restless. If it meet with an object that is suitable to its nature, yet if it be not answerable to all its wants, it will still be complaining, wherein it is unsupplied, and so unquiet. If it meet with an object that is suitable to its nature, and answerable to all its wants, yet if it be not eternal, it must needs be full of fears and troubles in the forethoughts of its amission of so great a good, which would imbitter the present possession of it; for the soul being incorruptible and immortal itself, cannot but desire that good which will run parallel with its own

life; and if it desire it nothing will fully satisfy it till it obtain such a good. Now nothing in this world is suitable to the soul's nature—the soul is spiritual, the things of this world are carnal—nor answerable to the various indigencies of the soul—the soul's wants are many, and in a manner infinite; besides they are spiritual, as pardon of sin, peace with God, peace of conscience, &c., when the good things of this life are particular, finite, and bodily—nor equal to the soul's duration—the soul will abide and continue after millions of ages and generations, for ever and ever; but this world passeth away, and all the good things thereof. But this God, whom I am persuading thee, reader, to know and acquaint thyself with, is in all these respects perfect, and so will satisfy thy soul. God is a spiritual good—a spirit, John iv. 23, the Father of spirits, and so suitable to the nature of thy soul. He is a universal good, all good, and so answerable to the many wants of thy soul. He is an eternal good, a good that never dieth, never fadeth—a good that only hath immortality, and so is equal to thy soul's duration; therefore the disciple crieth out to Christ, 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth,' John xiv. 8; and David tells us, that he is fully pleased in having God for his portion, Ps. xiv. 5, 6.

Give any man both that which he would have, and that which he should have, and he is contented. If indeed you give a man what he would have, supposing it be that which he should not have, his desires being depraved and vitiated, he cannot be contented when he hath what he desired, because lusts are unsatiable, and sinful desires never satisfied; thence the heathen emperors had their inventors of new pleasures, and possibly that may be the meaning of that place, Rom. i. 28. The heathen, wearied with common, invented unnatural delights. But give a man what he would have, suppose it be what he should have, his desires being rectified, and he is then at ease and rest.

He who knoweth God aright is fully satisfied in him; when he once drinketh of the 'fountain of living waters,' he thirsteth no more after other objects, Job iv. 14. Though the soul still desireth to know more of God, till it come to that place where it shall know as it is known, as David, though satisfied with his portion, Ps. xvi. 4, 5, yet thirsted after more of it, Ps. lxiii. 1, 2, yet it is quiet and contented in God. And indeed the sweetness which it tasteth in acquaintance with the incomparable God, makes it long after nearer and fuller acquaintance with him. When Moses was once acquainted with God, he begs that he might see and know more of his glory; and the reason is, because while God is the object, there

can be no satiety, he being the God of all joy and consolation; neither can there be such a full acquaintance as to cease desires after further acquaintance, he being an object still too great for the faculties to comprehend. The desires of the glorified are without anxiety, because they are satisfied in the object of their desires; and their satisfaction or enjoyment is without satiety or loathing, because they see still infinite cause to desire him.

When the soul once comes to know God, as the needle touched with the loadstone, when it turns to the north, it is then quiet, though before, like the dove, it hovered up and down over the waters of this world, and could find no rest. This knowledge, if right, diffuseth into the soul a sweet tranquillity, silent peace, secret settled calmness, besides a ravishing prevision, and blessed fore-fruition of its fuller acquaintance in the other life.

3. The knowledge of God is a saving knowledge. Many perish for all their great knowledge of creatures; their knowledge may light them to the more dismal chambers of death, of blackness of darkness for ever, Job xv. 24. And indeed their knowledge, like many pigs of silver in a vessel sinking, presseth them the deeper into hell; but the knowledge of God is saving; God will know him in the other world, who knows him in this. He will be so far from knowing them hereafter who are ignorant of him here, that he will come 'in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not God,' 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. But he will own them, and take acquaintance with them then, that own him and are acquainted with him now: Ps. xci. 14, 'I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.' God will set him as high as heaven, who knoweth his name on earth. Reader, it is as much worth as heaven to thee to know this incomparable God. 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,' John xvii. 3. It is the morning, though not the meridian of heaven; it is the bud, though not the ripe fruit of glory; it is the seed, though not the harvest of the inheritance above, to know the true God and Jesus Christ. This knowledge is of the same nature, though not of the same measure, with that in the other world, Eph. iv. 13. Now the Christian knoweth as a child, then he shall know as a man; now he seeth God as it were at a distance through the prospective glass of faith, but then he shall see God face to face. 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The means of acquaintance with God. A sense of our ignorance. Attendance on the word. Fervent prayer.

The means which I shall offer as helpful to the attainment of this knowledge of God, are these:

1. Be sensible of thine ignorance of him. A conceited scholar is no good learner. He that thinks he knoweth enough already, will never be beholden to a master to teach him more: 'Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him,' Prov. xxvi. 12. This is that which locked up the Pharisees in the dark dungeon of ignorance: they are blind; truth itself called them blind, Mat. xxii. 16, 17. But they conceited their eyes were good, and so neglected the means of curing them. 'Ye say ye see;' I do not say ye see, but ye conceit so, 'therefore your sin remaineth,' John ix. 40, 41, therefore your ignorance continueth. When ignorance and confidence, which are often twins, go together, the condition of a man is helpless; partly because such a person will not take that pains in reading, and praying, and conference, and meditation, without which the knowledge of God cannot be had; Dan. xii. 4, 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' It is an allusion to merchants, that run to this and that port, to sell out and take in commodities; or to a tradesman, that runs to this and that mart or place to buy and sell, whereby their stocks are increased. But a conceited man will never labour thus for that which he thinks he hath already. 'If thou diggest as for silver, and searchest as for hid treasure, then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and attain the knowledge of God,' Prov. ii. 4, 5. Men count digging hard work, and will sweat at it when they dig for silver: such diligence must they use who will get the knowledge of God. But though poor men, who are sensible of their want of the knowledge of God, and of their woeful condition thereby, will work to preserve themselves from perishing; yet rich men, who think they can do well enough without it, will spare their pains, partly, because all knowledge must be obtained from God by fervent prayer; and a conceited man will neither be instant with God for it, nor will God give it to him. God is the God of knowledge, 1 Sam. ii. 2; and from him all true saving knowledge cometh; Prov. ii. 6, 'The Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.' As none can see the sun

by candle-light, but by its own light, so none can know God savingly by the light of nature, but by light derived from himself. Now a conceited person will not go to God for knowledge. What need I? thinks he; I have enough already. Poverty is a friend to prayer: 'The poor useth entreaties,' Prov. xviii. 23; but pride or conceitedness is an enemy to prayer; 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God,' Ps. x. 4. Who will beg that of his neighbour which he is confident he hath at home? Neither will God undertake the instruction of proud scholars: 'The humble he will teach, the meek he will guide in judgment,' Ps. xxv. 9. Such as are willing to be taught will be thankful for their learning, and are fitted for guidance and direction; but conceited persons are quite contrary. Therefore, reader, beware of this mist in which many miscarry. 'He that thinketh he knoweth anything, knoweth nothing as he ought to know,' 1 Cor. viii. 2; but labour to get thine hearted affected with thine ignorance, and the woeful consequents of it, Ps. xcv. 10, 11. This will be a good step to knowledge. The apostle gives the same direction: 1 Cor. iii. 18, 'If any man seem to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise.' If thou seemest to be knowing, be ignorant in thy own sense and feeling and apprehension, that thou mayest be knowing. Our Lord Jesus gives the same counsel to the sick and dying Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 17, 18, and acquaints her that her ignorance of her ignorance, and conceitedness of her knowledge, was the great hindrance of her recovery.

2. Study much the works, and especially the word of God. The works of God are a book wherein you may read of him, and by which you may hear of him. 'The heavens declare his glory,' Ps. xix. 1; 'The earth is full of his goodness,' Ps. xxxiii. 5. As the shadow hath some proportion to the body to which it relates, so the works of God are some representation of the wise, powerful, gracious God to whom they belong. Rom. i. 19, 21, 'The invisible things of God are seen by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead;' therefore consider the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hands.

The word of God is a glass, wherein thou mayest see his beauty and grace and glory, and so see him as to be transformed into his likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18. In the works of God you may see his steps, the prints of his feet; they are therefore called his paths and his goings, Ps. lxxvii. 19. But in his word we may see his face, the comeliness of his countenance, how lovely and amiable he is; therefore it is called a glass, 2 Cor. iii. 18: so that, as the sight of a

man's face helpeth and conduceth more to our knowledge of him than the sight of his steps, so the word of God is a far greater means of our acquaintance with him than the works of creation and providence. Therefore, I say, study especially the word of God. The Scripture is the key of knowledge, Luke xi. 52, and unlocks the mysteries which were kept hid from ages and generations, and opens the secrets of heaven to thy soul. It is therefore called light, Ps. cxix. 105, and a lamp, Prov. vi. 23, because it discovers hidden things, helps thee to see what thou canst not without it, and directs thee in thy motions and actions. David had more knowledge than his enemies, and they were subtle; than his teachers, and they were no dwarfs in knowledge—such as Gad and Nathan; than the ancient, and with 'the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days is understanding,' Job xii. 12, 13; and what was the means of it? 'For thy testimonies are my meditation,' Ps. cxix. 97–99. The gospel is the eyesalve by which the blind come to see, Ps. xix. 7. The fragrancy and attractiveness of the incomparable God increaseth up and down in the world as the gospel is propagated. 'Thanks be to God, who maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge (the knowledge of God, like a rich perfume, causeth and leaveth a fragrant odoriferous scent wherever it comes) by us (the ministers of the gospel as the instruments hereof) in every place,' 2 Cor. ii. 14. The ministry of the word is the chariot of the Sun of righteousness, whereby he conveyeth the light of the knowledge of God to the world. Therefore attend on preaching, and give diligence to reading: 'Search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of me,' John v. 39.

3. Be frequent and fervent with God to give thee the knowledge of himself. There is a twofold light requisite to bodily vision: a light in the eye, (a blind man cannot see at noon-day;) and a light in the air, (the best eye cannot see in the dark:) so there is a twofold light requisite to the effectual sight of God—viz., the light of the word and the light of the Spirit; the word cannot do it without the Spirit, and the Spirit will not do it without the word; where the word is afforded both are needful. 'There is a spirit in man,' a passive receptiveness as a capable subject, 'but the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding,' Job xxxii. 8.

All natural abilities, all acquired endowments, all the reading and learning, all the teachers and tutors in the world, cannot help one poor soul to the saving knowledge of God. It is God that teacheth man knowledge, Ps. xciv. 10. He who made light in the first creation, only can cause light in the new creation; 2 Cor. iv.

6, 'But God, who caused light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' He that at first said, 'Let there be light,' when darkness covered the face of the world, 'and there was light,' a corporeal light, can command spiritual light, and the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ, who is the express image of his person. Therefore the apostle betakes himself to God for the gift, 'Praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him,' &c., Eph. i. 17, 18; so David often, Ps. cxix. 18, 34, 35, 125, 143, 144; Rev. iii. 18. Reader, art thou blind? take the counsel of thy Saviour. Go to him for eyesalve that thou mayest see, and be confident he that bids thee come to him for that will bid thee welcome when thou comest, Rev. iii. 18. 'None knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him,' Mat. xi. 27. Therefore whoever thou art that sittest in darkness, and in the shadow of death, go to the sun for light, go to the Sun of righteousness, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 9, for the light of the knowledge of God. Dost thou not know the sinfulness and misery of a blind dark state, that vengeance is the fruit of this ignorance? Ps. lxxix. 6; that God will pour out his wrath upon them that know him not? Go, therefore, as the blind man, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Cry, sigh, mourn, pray: 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me;' though he hear not presently, hold on, continue instant in prayer; though the devil and flesh rebuke thee, as the multitude him, yet hold on, call louder, 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me,' Mark x. 47; 'Lord, that I might receive my sight,' ver. 51; and doubt not but he will have pity on thee, as he had on him, and touch thine eye, and give thee to see the things of thy peace; for thine encouragement thou hast his promise: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord;' Jer. xxxi. 34, 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.' So James i. 6; Hosea ii. 20; Heb. viii. 8, 9. Oh, with what hope mayest thou sue these bonds and plead these promises, when he that made them is a God that cannot lie, Titus i. 2, and therefore cannot but perform them! Again, observe how kindly he took it of Solomon, when he bid Solomon ask what he would, that he asked wisdom, 2 Chron. i. 10. Give me wisdom and knowledge, saith Solomon: and the thing which Solomon asked pleased the Lord, 1 Kings iii. 10. And the Lord said unto Solomon, 'Because this was in thine heart, because thou hast not asked riches, nor honour, nor the life of thine enemies,

nor long life, wisdom and knowledge is granted to thee, and I will give thee wealth and honour,' ver. 11. When a poor creature, sensible of its blindness and darkness, lieth at the feet of God, begging spiritual light and sight, the heart of the Redeemer is taken with such a request, and subscribes the petition with, Wisdom and knowledge is granted to thee. Be but diligent, reader, in the use of these means, and thou mayest be confident of success: 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; for the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding,' Prov. ii. 3–6.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Exhortation to choose this incomparable God for our portion; with some motives thereunto.

2. If this God be such an incomparable God, then choose this God for thy portion, and take him for thy happiness. Is it possible for thee to read so much of the incomparableness of God in his being, attributes, works, and word, and not desire him? Thou canst hardly see an excellent person, but thou art wishing him for thy friend, thy companion; nor an excellent estate, but thou art wishing it were thine inheritance, thy portion; and canst thou hear of him who is excellency itself originally, Job xiii. 11, the spring and standard of all excellency in others, whose name alone is excellent, Ps. cxlviii. 13, and not wish, Oh that this incomparable God were my friend, my father, my head, my husband, my lot, my portion? Who will give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem? Oh, who will help me to drink of the well of salvation, of the fountain of living waters, of the pure river that floweth from the throne of God and the Lamb? Canst thou hear so much of his worth, though infinitely short, and not desire him? Is it possible for a rational creature to read of such a bottomless treasure, of such boundless pleasure, of such an infinite inconceivable good, and not covet the enjoyment of it? O man, where are thy wits? whither art thou fallen? art thou a man or a beast? Ah, didst thou know the gift of God, and what it is that is offered thee, thou wouldst scorn the highest honours, sweetest carnal delights, greatest riches, yea, trample upon all the crowns and kingdoms of this world

for it. It is an ineffable privilege that thou art a creature capable of so vast a happiness, it is a special favour that thou hast leave to aspire after such an immense inheritance; and when it is tendered to thee, wilt thou refuse it? wilt thou neglect it? Oh, wilt thou not give it all acceptation?

Having spoken in another treatise to this particular, I shall here only offer two or three things to thy serious thoughts, and proceed to a third exhortation.

1. Consider, what is offered thee, when the incomparable God is offered thee for thy portion. And truly, to explain this head fully, would require the pen, yea, exceed the skill, of an angel. None can tell what God is, but God himself. All the sheets in the explication of the doctrine speak somewhat of him, but not the thousand thousandth part of that excellency that is in him. Reader, I may tell thee, when God is offered thee, the greatest good that ever was, that ever will be, that ever can be, is offered thee; there never was, or can be, the like offered thee; more than heaven and earth, than both worlds, than millions of worlds, is offered thee. This God who is offered thee is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the God of gods, the blessed and glorious potentate, the first cause, the original being, self-sufficient, all-sufficient, absolutely perfect, incapable of any addition or diminution. This God who is offered thee is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity every moment, to whom a thousand years, yea, millions of ages, are but as one day, as one moment, whose duration is incapable of the least accession, who is boundless in his being, omnipotent in his power, unsearchable in his wisdom, inconceivable in his grace, and infinite in all his perfections. He dwelleth in that light that is inaccessible; before him angels, the highest of creatures, vail their faces; to him the whole creation is less than nothing, and vanity. This God who is offered thee made all things of nothing, supports all things, influenceth all things, and is all things, and infinitely more than all things. He is so needful a good that thou art undone without him. This was the misery of the heathen on earth, Eph. ii. 12, and of the damned in hell, Mat. xxv. 41, the very hell of hell. He is so plentiful a good that thou art perfectly happy in him, Ps. cxliv. 15, thou needest no more. He is the heaven of heavens, Ps. xvi. 11, the safest refuge. O friend, what dost thou think of having this God for thy portion? Is it not worth the while to have this God for thy God? wilt thou not say, 'Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great: who would not fear thee, O king of nations'? Jer. x. 6, 7. Again,

the God who is offered thee is the well of salvation, the Lord of life, the God of all consolation, a hive of sweetness, a paradise of pleasure, a heaven of joy. He is the richest grace, the dearest love, the surest friend, the highest honour, the vastest treasure, the exactest beauty, the chiefest good, and the fullest felicity. He is one that can enlarge and suit all thy faculties, relieve and answer all thy necessities, fill up and satisfy all the capacities of thy heaven-born soul. God is a good which Christ died to purchase for thee, Eph. ii. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 18. And surely if Christ thought him worth his blood, he is worthy thine acceptance. God is a comprehensive universal good, not one, but all good; riches, honours, pleasures, friends, relations, health, life, earth, heaven, this world, the other world, all the good of both worlds, and infinitely more; and art thou not covetous of such wealth, that is better worth than both worlds? Phil. iv. 19; Ps. xxiii. 1; Gen. xvii. 1. God is an everlasting good, a good that will stand by thee, and abide with thee when all other good things shall fail thee, 1 Tim. vi. 7; Ps. lxxiii. 25. He is that good which thou wouldst have if thou art well in thy wits: he is that good which thou shouldst have if thou answerest the end of thy creation; he is that good which thou must have, if thou art not eternally miserable; he is the only suitable satisfying good, which hits the nature, and fits the desire of the rational creature. O reader, I say again, what dost thou think of having this incomparable God for thy God? Surely by this time thy heart may well melt into astonishment that he will allow thee to seek so matchless a portion. Well, what sayest thou to him? Is it not worth the while to have him for thine, to whom thou wilt call in the day of distress, to whom thou wilt cry in a dying hour, when thy soul stands quivering on thy lips, ready to take its flight into the unknown regions of the other world, when devils will be waiting to seize it, as soon as ever it leaves the body, to hale it to the unquenchable flames of hell, when thy friends and relations shall be weeping and wailing by thee, but unable to afford thy dying body the least cordial, or thy departing soul the least comfort? Ah, friend, what wilt thou do in such an hour, which is hastening on thee, without the incomparable God? Believe it, though thou mayest live without him, thou canst not die, without an infinite horror, without him. Is it not worth the while to have him for thine, to whom thou must stand or fall for ever, from whose mouth thy sentence of eternal absolution or condemnation must come, and who shall judge thee to thine unchangeable state of life or death? Though thou mayest think thou canst do well enough at this day

with the world for thy portion; yet what wilt thou do at that day, when the world shall be in a flame, if God be not thy portion? Art thou willing or not, to have this God for thine? What sayest thou? Canst thou find in thine heart to deprive thy precious soul of such an inestimable treasure, and to leave it naked in the other world to the cruelty of devils, and the dreadful curses of the law? Methinks, though I have spoken little, yet I have said enough, to one that will but let his reason judge, to draw out thy most earnest desires after this incomparable God.

2. Consider upon what terms thou mayest have this God for thy God. You may possibly think that so boundless a good must cost you very dear, and the price must be vast of a pearl that is so matchless; but lo, to thy comfort, all the condition which God requireth of thee is only to accept him heartily and thankfully in his Son. Canst thou have anything cheaper? wouldst thou desire him in his terms to fall lower? nay, is it possible so to do, and make thee happy? Nor can he be thine unless thou receivest him for thine. It is a poor favour that is not worth acceptance. Do but take him for your happiness, and you shall have him for your happiness.

Thou givest more for thy bread, thy clothes, thy house, for the needful comforts that are for the support of thy frail body, than thou needest give for the great, glorious, incomprehensible, incomparable God. Thou payest money for them, but thou mayest have him without money and without price. One would think that the equity of the condition should both amaze thee and allure thee. Consider, I say, God doth not require of thee things impossible to thee; he doth not say, If thou wilt remove mountains, dry up oceans, stop the course of nature, create worlds, I will then be thine, as great as I am; he doth not say, If thou wilt satisfy my justice, answer the demands of my law, merit my love and favour, then I will be thy God. No; he himself hath done all this for thee by the death of his Son; all he desireth is, that thou wouldst accept him in his Son for thy God. Nay, he doth not require of thee anything that is barbarous or cruel, as the heathen deities did, by the devil, of their worshippers. He doth not say, If you will lance and mangle your bodies, as Baal's priests did; if ye will go barefoot in sackcloth long and tedious pilgrimages, as the papists do; if ye will offer your children in the fire, and give the fruit of your bodies for the sins of your souls, as some did, then I will be your God. Again, he doth not require of thee things that are chargeable, to offer the best and chief of thy flock daily in sacrifice

to him; nor, as he once did of the young man, to sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor; nor, as idolaters, to lay down such a part of thy estate for thy pardon; but he only requires that thou wouldst take the Lord for thy God; and wilt thou not do it? Canst thou deny him and thy poor soul so reasonable, so equitable a request? As the servant said to Naman, 'If the prophet had commanded thee some great thing, wouldst not thou have done it? how much more then when he only saith, Wash, and be clean?' So say I to thee; if God had commanded the greatest things imaginable, wouldst thou not to thy power have done them, that thou mightest enjoy the blessed God for thy eternal portion? how much more then when he only saith, 'Thou shalt have no other God before me'? O reader, do but observe that first command, which contains the sum both of thy duty and felicity, and thou art made, thou art a blessed man for ever. Take the true God in Jesus Christ for thy God, prize him as thy God, love him as thy God, honour him as thy God, and obey him as thy God, and he will be thy God for ever. Do but as much for the true God as the covetous man doth for his wealth, which is his god, as the intemperate man for his belly, which is his god; they give their highest esteem, their choicest affections, and their greatest service to that which they take for their god. And surely the true God is more worthy hereof, and will requite thee best for them.

3. Consider for what end God offereth himself to thee. I would not have thee mistake, because God out of his infinite pity to his miserable creatures, is instant and urgent with them to accept of him, to think therefore that God hath any need of thee, or seeketh his own happiness therein; I tell thee, if thou hadst no more need of God than he hath of thee, thou mayest let him alone. No; it is purely for thy good, for thy real and eternal good, that he offereth himself to thee; he needeth thy service no more than he doth the service of the damned, of the devils; and he knoweth how to make use of thee for his own glory, as he doth of them, if thou foolishly rejectest his offer of himself. Thy righteousness will not help him, Job xxii. 2, 3, nor thy wickedness hurt him, Job xxxv. 2. He offereth himself to thee, not that he may be blessed by thee, but that he may be bountiful to thee. It is thy good, not his own, that he looks at; the felicity of accepting him is thine own, and the misery of neglecting him is thine own, Prov. ix. 12. Men call customers to them, press them with many arguments and entreaties to buy, that they may enrich themselves by their customers; but God calls men to buy of him, not to enrich himself—he is as rich, and

perfect and happy as he can be—but to enrich themselves; I counsel thee, saith Christ to his lukewarm church, to buy of me gold. Why? that he may get somewhat by her, and enrich himself? No; that thou mayest be rich; that thou, not I, mayest be rich. Now, reader, ponder it seriously, it is wholly for thy own good, that thou mayest escape wrath and death, and attain heaven and life, that God is pleased once more to offer himself to thee. What is thy mind about his offer? Wilt thou have him for thy portion or no? Is there anything unreasonable in his desire or demands? Doth not thy eternal felicity depend on thine acceptance of him? What sayest thou? Wilt thou have God for thy portion, or wilt thou have the devil for thy portion? Thou shalt have an eternal portion, good or bad. The worldling's portion of good things is but for this world, and the godly man's portion of evil things is but for this world; both have immortal souls, which will abide in the other world for ever; and their souls must have immortal portions to abide with them there for ever. Therefore, reader, consider what thou doest, either thou must take God, in and through Christ, for thy portion for ever, or hell and death and wrath and devils for thy portion for ever; one of the two is the portion of all the sons and daughters of Adam. If thou wilt still prefer the world before God, and love the creature above God, and please thy flesh more than God; when once thou appearest in the other world, God will rain on thee 'fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this will be the portion of thy cup,' Ps. xi. 6. But if now thou acceptest him in his Son (for there is no making God thy friend but by Christ) for thy chiefest good and happiness, when all thy friends shall leave thee, and dearest relations forsake thee, yea, when 'thy flesh and thy heart shall fail thee, God will be the strength of thine heart, and thy portion for ever.' O friend, consider what I have said in this use, and the Lord give thee understanding, that thou mayest know when thou art well offered, and be wise on this side the other world.

CHAPTER XXV.

Exhortation to give God the glory of his incomparable excellency; with some considerations to enforce it.

If God be such an incomparable God, give him the glory and honour of his incomparable excellencies; his incomparable perfections must have incomparable praises. 'Praise him,' saith the psalmist, 'according to his excellent greatness,' Ps. cl. 2. But,

alas! what tongue, what understanding of men or angels can do it, can praise him according to his excellent greatness? But though we cannot praise him according to the utmost of his excellencies, we must praise him according to the utmost of our abilities. The highest God, Ps. xcii. 1, must have the highest praises: Ps. cxlix. 6, 'The high praises of God are in their mouths.' The greatest God, Ps. cxlv. 3, must have our greatest praises; 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.' Low or little praises are a dispraise to one so eminently, so infinitely, high and great.

Ordinary commendations of an extraordinary person are a discommendation to him. 'According to thy name, so, O Lord, is thy praise to the end of the earth,' Ps. xlviii. 10. Therefore his name alone being excellent, Ps. cxlviii. 13, his praise alone must be excellent. David tells God, 'I will praise thee yet more and more,' Ps. lxxi. 14. He had already praised him much, but he would endeavour to praise him more; and when he had done so, he would praise him more, and still more. We read of songs of degrees, Ps. cxx. and cxxi. We should ascend in our praises of God by a holy climax, till we come to the highest degree that is possible, and screw up our faculties herein to the utmost pitch that they are capable of.

Praise him for the incomparableness of his being. That he is an independent, all-sufficient, absolutely perfect, incomprehensible, omnipresent, eternal, infinite being, should much affect our hearts. 'Praise ye the Lord, praise him, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for ever. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised.' Why? 'The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens; who is like to the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?' Ps. cxiii. 1–5.

Praise him for his incomparableness in his attributes, for the incomparableness of his power: 'O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee?' Ps. lxxxix. 8. For the incomparableness of his holiness: 'Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness?' Exod. xv. 11. For the incomparableness of his mercy: 'Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity, and passing by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage, because he delighteth in mercy?'

Praise him for the incomparableness of his words: 'Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men,' Ps. cvii. 8, 15, 21, 31, lxxii. 18, and cxxxvi. 4. Praise him for the work of creation, Ps. cxiv. 1–5; Job xxxviii. 4–6. Praise him for his works of providence: Ps. xcvii. 8, 9, cxxxvi. throughout, and cvii. Praise him especially for the work of redemption: 'Blessed be the Lord God of

Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people,' Luke i. 68 ; Ps. ix. 1 ; Rev. xv. 3.

Praise him for the incomparableness of his word : 'Wonderful are thy testimonies,' Ps. cxix. 129. How often doth the sweet singer of Israel praise God for them, as a singular kindness! Ps. cxlvii., two last verses. 'He gave his statutes to Moses, his laws and commandments to Jacob. He hath not dealt so with every nation ; praise ye the Lord.'

Praise him by admiring him. Wonder at his being, as they of Christ: 'What manner of man is this, that the winds and seas obey him?' Mat. viii. 27. What manner of God is this, who knoweth no bounds, no beginning, no succession, no addition? An amazing admiration of him is a high commendation of him. And, indeed, our silent wondering at his perfections is almost all the worship we can give him : Ps. lxv. 1, 'Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion,'—*Heb.*, 'Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Sion ;' not that praise was dumb or tongue-tied in Sion, for praise in no part of the world speaks higher or louder than in Sion ; but to shew that when the people of God set themselves to praise him, they are struck with amazement and wonder at his matchless being and beauty, at his infinite excellencies and perfections ; and wanting words to express them, they sit down in a silent admiration of them. Thou wouldst wonder at Adam, if he were now alive, for his age. Oh, wonder at him that is from everlasting to everlasting, that is the cause and original of all things, that is what he is, that is, and nothing else is ; that is all he is in one indivisible point of eternity.

Wonder at his attributes, admire his holiness. 'Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants, he chargeth the angels with folly,' Job iv. 18. Behold, wonder at it. Again, 'Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints ; the heavens are not clean in his sight,' Job xv. 15. Admire his wisdom ; cry out with the apostle, 'Oh the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God,' Rom. xi. 33. Admire his love ; 'Behold what manner of love hath the Father loved us with,' 1 John iii. 1. Admire his power, that he can do what he will do : 'Who is a strong Lord like unto thee?' Ps. lxxxix. 8.

Wonder at his works. Thou art ready to wonder at the rare works of some curious artist ; alas! all their works are toys to the works of the mighty Creator and possessor of heaven and earth. 'O Lord, how marvellous are thy works!' Ps. civ. 24. His work is honourable and glorious, Ps. cxi. 3, and worthy thy greatest wonder.

What a piece is the creation! how marvellous! how mysterious! Ps. viii. 1–5. 'The heavens declare his glory,' Ps. xix. 1, and the

earth is 'full of his goodness,' Ps. civ. 24. What a work is providence! Read Ps. civ. and cvii. How many rarities, curiosities, mysteries, are wrapped up in it, which are only seen in the other world! Ps. lxxvii. 19.

What man is this, say they, for he commandeth with authority, and the unclean spirits come out of men? Mark i. 27. What a masterpiece, what rare workmanship indeed is redemption! a work that the angels are always prying into and wondering at, Eph. iii. 8; 1 Pet. i. 10.

Wonder at his word. When thou hearest it, dost thou not perceive a majesty and authority aweing thy conscience accompanying it? 'And they were all amazed and astonished at his doctrine,' Luke iv. 32. The very officers who were sent to apprehend Christ could not but wonder at his words, and returned to them who set them awork. 'Never man spake as he spake,' John vii. 47. There are great things in the law of God, Hosea viii. 12; things that are wonderful, Ps. cxix. 18, which may well be wondered at. And all, saith the evangelist, bare him witness, and 'wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth,' Luke iv. 22.

Praise him by speaking always highly and honourably of him. If his name alone be excellent, take heed that thou dost not take his excellent name in vain. Thy apprehensions of him must be ever high, and thy expressions of him honourable. Thy tongue is therefore called thy glory, because therewith thou mayest glorify thy God, Ps. lvii. 8.

Never speak of God rashly or at random, without a serious consideration of whom thou speakest; and let thy expressions of him and to him be becoming his vast perfections; 'Ascribe greatness to our God,' Deut. xxxii. 3.

Speak honourably of his being: so Moses, Exod. xiv. 11, 'Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises?' So Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 23, 'Lord God of Israel, there is no god like unto thee in heaven above, or in the earth beneath.' So David, 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

Speak honourably of his attributes, Ps. lxviii. 34; of his power, mercy, truth, justice, wisdom, and holiness; 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,' Isa. vi. 3.

Speak honourably of his works: Ps. lxxxvi. 8, 'Among all the gods there is none like unto thee; neither are there any works like unto thy works,' Ps. cxlv. 10.

Speak honourably of his word. 'The commandments of the Lord are pure,' Ps. xix. 7. 'Thy word is very pure. The statutes

of the Lord are right,' Ps. xix. 10. 'The law is holy, just, and good,' Rom. vii. 12. Though Paul's corruption took occasion, by the law's prohibitions, to become the most unruly, as the water at a bridge roars the more for the stop, yet he dares not lay the least fault upon the law, but layeth all upon himself; 'was the law sin? God forbid,' ver. 7. Far be it from me to have the least such thought. No; the law is holy, but I am carnal, sold under sin, ver. 14. So when he speaketh of the gospel, how honourably doth he speak of it! sometimes he calls it the glorious gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 4; the mysteries of the gospel, Eph. vi. 19; the word of truth, Col. i. 5.

Praise him by walking circumspectly and closely with him. Live always as one that believeth he hath at all times to do with this incomparable God, and is created, and preserved, and redeemed, to shew forth the praise of this God. When the psalmist had admired the incomparableness of this God in his being and doings, Ps. lxxxvi. 8, he presently subjoins, ver. 9, 'All nations whom thou hast made shall come and glorify thy name, and worship before thee. For thou art great, and dost wondrous things; thou art God alone.' O friend, this incomparable God must have incomparable obedience; 'Be still, and know that I am God,' Ps. xlvi. 10. 'Be still, be quiet; O sinner, cease, forbear any further to offend me, and know that I am God, incomparable in knowledge, acquainted with all thy ways and works, inward, outward, secret, private, public; incomparable in holiness, and perfectly hate all thy wickedness; incomparable in power, able to revenge myself on thee every moment, to turn thee body and soul into hell; incomparable in justice, and will by no means clear the guilty; yet incomparable in mercy, and will accept and receive prodigals, that, sensible of their folly and filthiness, return home to me, their Father, in the Son of my love. Be still, sinner; know this, that I am God; and obey my laws. But I have spoken more fully of this in the informations; only remember that the praise of thy life is the life of thy praise; because hereby thou dost in some measure represent the excellencies of this incomparable God, visible to the world, 1 Pet. ii. 9; Mat. v. 18. Offering praise, and ordering the conversation aright, are joined together by God himself, and let not us part them asunder, Ps. l. 23.

To help thee a little, that thou mayest give God the praise of incomparable perfections. Consider—

1. This God is excellency itself; he is not only excellent, Ps. viii. 1, and alone excellent, Ps. cxlviii. 13, but excellency, Job xiii. 11, 'should not his excellency make thee afraid?' Nay, he is greatness of excellency, Exod. xv. 7, nothing but excellency, 1

John i. 6. Now, think with thyself what honour is due to one that is excellent, alone excellent, excellency itself, and nothing but excellency. Can thy highest honour be high enough, or thy most excellent praises be excellent enough for such an excellency?

2. This God is the standard of all excellency. Nothing is excellent but because of its relation or likeness to him. Everything is more or less excellent as it is more or less related or conformable to him. Saints are the excellent of the earth, Ps. xvi. 3; more excellent than their neighbours, Prov. xii. 26; but it is because of his affection to them: 'Since thou art precious in my sight thou art honourable,' Isa. xliii. 4; and because of their relation and likeness to him, Deut. xxxiii. 29; 1 Pet. ii. 9; Ps. xlviii. 2, 3. The Scriptures are the most excellent of books; none like them. 'I have written unto thee excellent things,' Prov. xxii. 20. But what is the reason? Surely because they are the word of God, Eph. iii. 16; his mind, 2 Cor. ii. 17. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 16. The Sabbath is the most excellent of days, the queen of days, the golden spot of the week, because it is his day, set apart by him, and devoted to him. 'My holy day, the holy of the Lord, honourable,' Isa. lviii. 13. Grace is excellent, the beauty and glory of the creature, Prov. iv. 7; 2 Cor. iii. 18; more excellent than gold or fine gold, than rubies or pearls, Prov. iii. 14, 15; but why? because it is his image, it is a conformity to his nature, 2 Pet. i. 4; 2 Cor. iii. 18. When the Holy Ghost would render anything excellent, he mentions it with relation to God. The cedars of God, the city of God, the trees of God, the mountains of God, &c.; that is, the most excellent cedars, cities, trees, and mountains.

3. He is so excellent that even angels veil their faces in his presence. The excellent cherubims and seraphims, who are spotless in their natures, and faultless in their lives, who are the highest and honourablest, and ancientest house of the creation, who, as his special friends and favourites, are allowed to wait on him continually, to behold him face to face, and to enjoy him fully and perfectly, yet these angels veil their faces before him, as it were, ashamed of their starlight in the presence of the sun, and their drops in the presence of the ocean: Isa. vi. 1–3, 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. About it stood the seraphims: each had six wings; with twain he did fly, with twain he covered his feet, with twain he covered his face.' To cover the face is a sign or fruit of bashfulness, as in Rebekah, Gen. xxiv. 65. The face of an angel is void of all spots and wrinkles, it is full of beauty and brightness, a most excellent face. 'And all the council, looking steadfastly on

him, beheld his face as if it had been the face of an angel,' Acts vi. 15. Yet this face, as excellent as it is, they cover, as it were, ashamed of it before that God who alone is excellent.

4. He is so incomparably excellent that he humbleth himself to take notice of his perfect spirits, his heavenly host, and their perfect service in heaven. It is not only great and infinite condescension with him to observe the highest persons on earth, as kings and princes, and the holiest persons on earth, as the most eminent saints, and the highest and holiest performances of these saints, but it is boundless humiliation in him to look upon, with the least respect, the perfect spirits of just men, the principalities and powers that are in heaven, and their pure, perfect worship and service: Ps. cxiii. 5, 6, 'Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven?'

5. He is so incomparably excellent that he is above the highest adoration and worship of his creatures. Worship is the most high and honourable of all our works. Blessing and praising God is the most high and honourable act of worship; therefore this is that part of worship which suits the highest and honourablest state of the creature in heaven, and must continue for ever. As all our graces, of faith, and hope, and patience, &c., shall ere long be melted into love, and joy, and delight, so all our duties, of confession, petition, hearing and reading the word, receiving the sacraments, shall all be melted into praise and thanksgiving: Rev. vii. 11, 12, 'And the angels and elders that stood about the throne fell on their faces before the throne, and worshipped, saying, Amen, blessing, and honour, and thanksgiving, be unto our God, for ever;' and therefore David calls upon angels and the heavenly host to praise God, Ps. cxlviii. 2, 3. But this incomparably excellent God is above all this worship, this highest worship, though he be not above it so as to despise it, Ps. l. 15, 23, yet he is above it, so as to exceed it; that his saints and angels, though their powers are enlarged to the uttermost, though the strings of their faculties are wound and screwed up to the highest pitch and peg to sound forth his praise, even then they will fall infinitely short of praising and blessing him according to his deserts: Neh. ix. 5, 'Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.' He doth not say the name of God is exalted above the blessing and praise of men, of saints on earth in their imperfect state, nor above the blessing and praise of spirits of just men in heaven made perfect, but above all blessing and praise, above the blessing and praise of men, of angels, of the holiest men, of the highest angels, above all blessing and praise whatsoever and of whomsoever.

6. He is so incomparably excellent that his excellencies are beyond the understanding and apprehension of men and angels. The excellency of God is not only beyond all our expressions, verbal in our words, vital or real in our lives, but also beyond all our apprehensions. A fluent tongue may speak much of the excellency of God; an enlarged rational understanding can apprehend much more. The mind of man is much wider than his mouth; but the excellency of God is infinitely beyond all our apprehensions of him. His works are unsearchable, Rom. xi. 33. 'Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on, and I perceive him not,' Job ix. 11. He goeth by me in his works, he passeth by me in the operations of his hands, and I perceive him not. There are such motions of God in the heavenly bodies, earthly plants, ordinary providences, the growth of a child in the womb, &c., that men are nonplussed at them, they are at a loss about the nature, reason, and mode or gradual progressions of them. How much more is his being unsearchable, and his essence past finding out? If his footsteps are inconceivable and invisible, much more is his face; if his works cannot be apprehended, much less can his nature; because his works are in some respects finite, as they are terminated on limited beings, and they are also many of them visible, and so obvious to our senses; but his essence is wholly and altogether, and in all respects infinite, and is no way visible or liable to apprehension by our senses: 1 Tim. vi. 16, 'Who dwelleth in that light that is inaccessible.' As no mortal eye can behold the sun in its full strength, (the attempt of which, according to some, hath struck the adventurers blind,) so no creature whatsoever can apprehend the incomparable God in his full beauty and brightness, in his boundless excellency and perfection. It is the voice of God to Moses, 'Thou canst not see my face, for no man can see me and live,' Exod. xxxiii. 20. No man clothed with a mortal body, or in this estate of imperfection, can behold an extraordinary created appearance of God, but he is thereat filled with fears and frights, Job iv. 12–15, and xxi. 22; Dan. x. 8, 16, 17; Hab. iii. 16. No man, no, nor angel, can behold God in his infinite essence, to the utmost of his perfections, but would be thereat crumbled into nothing.

Reader, if God be thus incomparably excellent, that he is excellency itself, the standard of all excellency, that angels hide their heads as ashamed of themselves before him, that he condescendeth to shew the least respect to his high and perfect host in heaven, that he is infinitely above all their blessings and praises, all their conceptions and apprehensions, what praise, what honour, what glory shouldst thou give to this God! Though thou art unable to

give him all the glory that is due to his name, yea, the thousand thousandth part thereof, yet do thou give him all the glory thy mind, will, heart, affections, all thy faculties united together, and enlarged to the utmost, can possibly give him. Say to thy soul, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me praise his holy name,' Ps. ciii. 1.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Comfort to them that have the incomparable God for their portion.

Thirdly, This doctrine may be useful, by way of comfort, to all the people of God. If God be an incomparable God, then they are incomparably blessed who take him for their God, who have him for their happiness. Every person or people is happy or miserable, as the God is whom they serve, as that is in which they place their felicity; for nothing can give out more happiness to another than it hath in itself. That good must of necessity be first in the cause, either eminently or formally, which is conveyed from it to the effect. Those who serve the flesh, as their god and chief good, must needs be miserable, Phil. iii. 18; Rom. xvi. 18; because the flesh is a base and vile, Ps. xlix. 20, a weak and impotent, Isa. xxxi. 3, a fraudulent and deceitful, Jer. xvii. 9, a fading and transitory god, Ps. lxxiii. 25; 1 Cor. vi. 23. So they who own, and prize, and love the world as their god and chief good—of such we read, the covetous man is called an idolater, and covetousness idolatry, Eph. v. 5—are miserable, because their god is vain and empty, Eccles. i. 2, 3, piercing and vexatious, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, uncertain and unsatisfying, Eccles. v. 10; 1 Tim. vi. 17, frail, and not lasting, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30; Prov. xxiii. 5. Thus they who have idols for their gods are miserable, because their gods are poor, pitiful, blind, deaf, and impotent deities. They have eyes, and see not the wants of their worshippers; they have ears, and hear not the supplications of their suppliants; they have hands, and work not for the relief of their servants' necessities, or their deliverance out of their distresses; and thence the prophet infers the misery of their makers and adorers: 'All that make them are like unto them,' blind, and deaf, and impotent as they are, falsehood and a lie, and vanity, and nothing as they are, 1 Cor. viii. 4; 1 Sam. xii. 24, and so is every one that trusteth in them, Ps. cxv. 5-9. But the person who, through Christ, hath an interest in this great God, the almighty, all-wise, all-sufficient God, is happy: 'Happy is the people whose God is the Lord,' Ps. cxliv. 15; and incomparably happy, because that God who is his portion and happiness is an incomparable God. Therefore, as the Scripture mentions God to be incomparable in

excellency, it also mentions his people to be incomparable in felicity, and infers their incomparableness from his incomparableness who is their God.

The Holy Ghost tells us, none is like God; he hath no equal in worth and perfection: 'Who is a god like unto thee?' Exod. xv. 11; 'Among all the gods there is none like to thee,' Ps. lxxxvi. 6. And the Holy Ghost tells us also that no people is like the people of God, and that because God is theirs: 'Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee?' why, whence comes their incomparable happiness? truly, from the incomparable God; 'Saved by the Lord, who is the shield of thine help, and the sword of thine excellency.' Again, 'What nation is so great, which hath God so nigh unto them?' Deut. iv. 7. Israel at this time, to flesh and sense, seemed a most unhappy people; they were in a barren and howling wilderness, without a house to hide their heads in, without food, but what a miracle sent them in; without raiment, but what was on their backs; without any dealings or converse with other people; nay, in the midst of cruel and potent enemies, they must fight their way to Canaan against walled towns and sturdy giants; and yet, even in this plight, they are the happiest people under the cope of heaven; because the God of heaven, the incomparable God, was nigh to them. David asserts God's incomparable majesty, and thence Israel's incomparable felicity: 2 Sam. vii. 22, 23, 'Wherefore thou art great, O Lord, there is none like thee.' What followeth thence? 'And what nation at this day is like unto thy people, even like Israel?' Reader, if thou art once effectually called, if thou art a regenerated, sanctified person, know to thy comfort, and rejoice therein, that this incomparable God is thine. 2. That all his incomparable excellencies are thine. 3. That this incomparable God, with all his incomparable perfections, will be thine for ever.

1. This incomparable God is thine. That God who hath no superior, no equal, no fellow, is thine. He that is, and there is none else, Isa. xlvi. 9, is thine: he that is that he is, Exod. iii. 14, is thine. Thou hast a propriety in him, and a title to him. This is the great privilege of heaven's favourites: 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and he will be their God,' Rev. xxi. 3. This is the great promise, the sum, the substance of all the promises: 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people,' Jer. xxxi. 33. This is the great prayer of all that know how to pray, or what to pray for, Ps. lxxx. 12, and iv. 6; Exod. xxxiii. 15; Jer. xiv. 8. This is the great purchase of the Son of God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. His name is therefore Immanuel, God with us.

This is heaven itself, the very heaven of heavens; for it is not the place, but his presence, which makes heaven to be heaven: 'In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. Once more; this is the highest, the chiefest, the greatest gift which the infinite God can give to thee. When he giveth thee riches, and honours, and friends, and relations, he can give thee greater things; when he giveth thee sacraments, and Sabbaths, and seasons of grace, he can give thee greater things; when he giveth thee pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the graces of his Spirit, he giveth thee great things, but yet he can give thee greater; but when he giveth thee himself, he giveth thee the greatest gift that himself, though infinite in bounty, can give. Oh how sweet is that term of propriety, my God, my God. The Redeemer himself rolled it in his mouth over and over, as if he could never suck out the sweetness in it: 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the house of my God; and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which cometh down from my God,' Rev. iii. 12. David dwells on it as one unwilling to leave it, Ps. xviii. 1, 2.

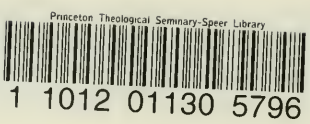
Reader, oh what cause hast thou to triumph in thy happiness, that the infinite God is thine! 'Fear not, I am thine,' Isa. xli. Sceptres, and kingdoms, and honours, and possessions, and friends, and relations, and liberty, and peace, and health, and strength, are not thine possibly, but God is thine; he that is all these, and more than these, is thine; he is thine own God—even (mark) 'our own God shall bless us,' Ps. lxvii. 6. Thou canst not call anything outward thine own. Thy estate is not thine own: 'I will take away my corn, and my wine, and my oil,' Hos. ii. 9, Hag. ii. 8. Thy relations are not thine own: Ezek. xvi. 20, 21, 'My children which thou hast born to me.' Thy credit is not thine own; no, thy very graces are not thine own, Cant. iv. 16. Nay, thou thyself art not thy own: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are not your own.' Thy body is not thine own, 1 Cor. vi. 16; nor your souls: Ezek. xviii. 3, 4, 'All souls are mine.' But God is thy own God, thy own glory, thy own exceeding joy, Ps. xliii. 4.

2. All the incomparable excellencies of this God, his incomparable word and works, are thine. As all he is is thine, so all he hath is thine, all he can be is thine, all he hath done is thine, all he can do is thine: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'All is thine.' All his incomparable attributes are thine. His incomparable power is thine to protect thee, Gen. xv. 1, 2; Exod. xv. 9–12; his incomparable wisdom is thine to direct thee, Ps. lxxiii. 23; his incomparable mercy is thine to pity and relieve thee in thy miseries, Judges x. 16; his

incomparable grace is thine to pardon all thine iniquities, Micah vii. 18; Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; his incomparable love is thine to refresh and delight thy soul, Ps. xxi. 5, 6; his incomparable justice is thine to accept thee as righteous for the sake of his Son, Rom. iii. 24; his incomparable faithfulness is thine to fulfil all the gracious promises which he hath made to thee, Ps. lxxxix. 33, 34; his incomparable majesty and beauty and glory are thine, to make thee great, and render thee comely and glorious for ever, Ezek. xvi. 14; Isa. xliii. 4; his incomparable joys and pleasures are thine to feed on, and be filled with, Ps. xxxvi. 8; Mat. xxv. 21; his incomparable works are thine; his works of creation, Ps. xxxvii. 11, Mat. v. 4; his works of providence, Rom. viii. 28; for your sakes I have sent to Babylon, Isa. xliii. 14, and xliii. 4; his work of redemption is yours, John x. 15; Gal. ii. 20; Rev. i. 5, 6; his incomparable word is thine, indited for thee, sanctified to thee, making thee wise to salvation. It is therefore called their word, the word of their testimony, Rev. xii. 11. 'Whatsoever things were written were written for our instruction, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope,' Rom. xv. 4.

3. This incomparable God, and all his incomparable excellencies, will be thine for ever. His incomparable eternity will be thine, and so long as he is God he will be thy God. When the sensualist's god is gone, thy God will remain; when the worldling's god fails him, thy God will not forsake thee; when all thine honours, riches, friends, relations, leave thee, thy God will abide with thee: 'This God is our God for ever and ever,' Ps. xlviii. 14. Not for a day, or week, or month, or year, or age, but for ever and ever; not for a thousand years, or a thousand generations, or millions of millions of generations, but for ever and ever; not for as many millions of ages as there are stars in heaven, drops in the sea, creatures great and small in both worlds, but for ever. Oh happy conjunction of propriety with eternity, this God is our God for ever and ever! Thine immortal soul hath an immortal God, an immortal good: 'Thou shalt ever be with this incomparable Lord.' Comfort thy soul in the midst of all the persecutions and afflictions that befall thee in this world, with these words: 1 Thes. iv. 16–18, 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

END OF VOL. IV.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